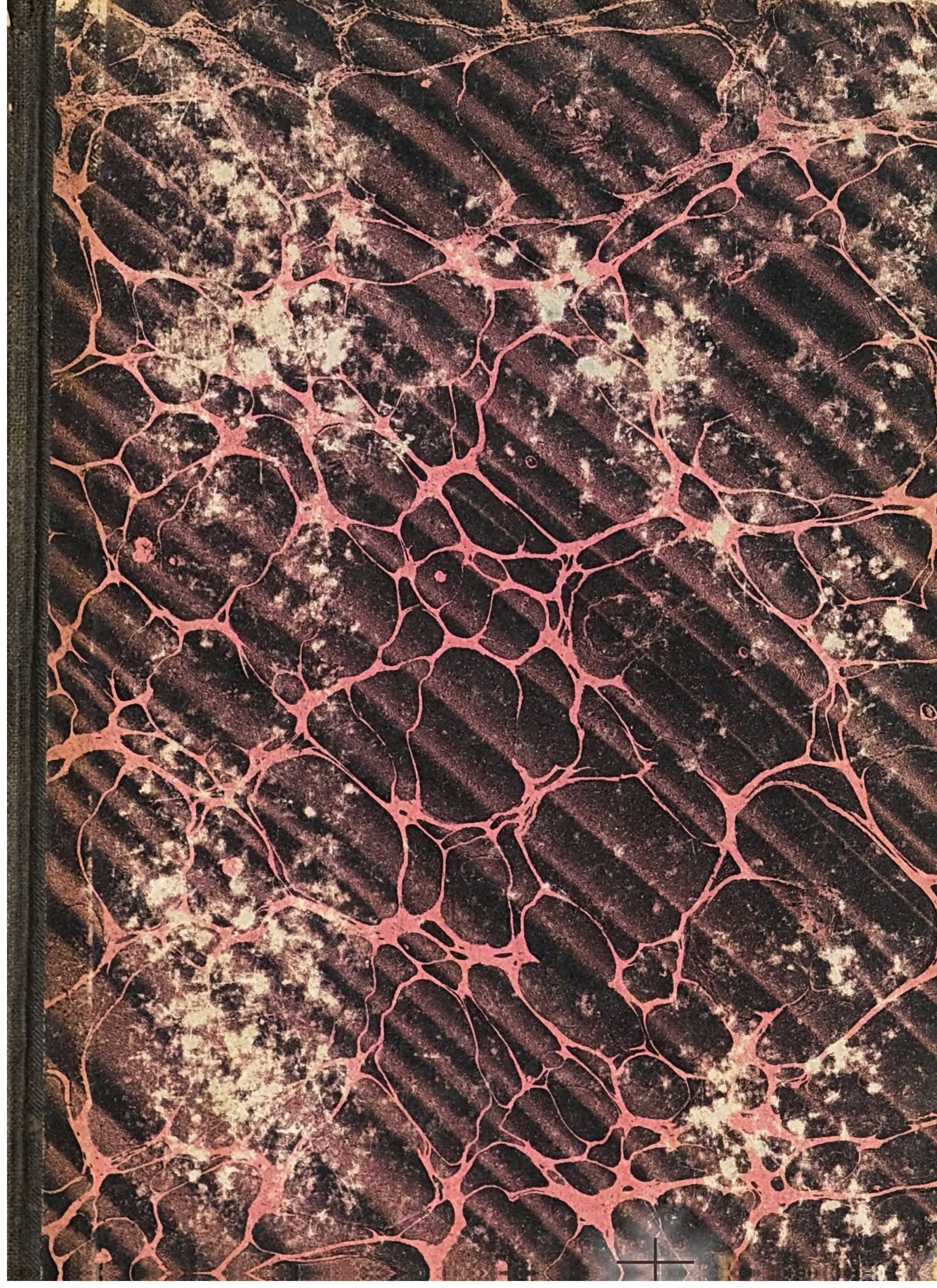




Schmid

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MORAL TALES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

CANON CHR. VON SCHMID.

A NEW PICTORIAL EDITION IN TEN PARTS.

PART I.



STUTTGART,
J. B. MÜLLER.

LEIPZIG,
L. F. HERBIG.

W. S. ORR & CO., 147 STRAND, AND AMEN CORNER, PATERNOSTER
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THE FLOWER-BASKET.



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A MORAL TALE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF
CANON CHRISTOPHER VON SCHMID

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JULIUS NISLE.

STUTTGART,
PRINTED FOR J. B. MÜLLER.
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THE FLOWER-BASKET.

CHAPTER I.

OLD JAMES, AND HIS DAUGHTER MARY.

IN the small German town of Eichburg (Oakborough), the seat of the Counts of Eichburg, there lived, more than a hundred years ago, one James Rode, a very sensible and worthy man. He had come there as a poor lad, apprenticed to the Count's head—gardener at the castle; but his excellent gifts, the goodness of his heart, the cleverness he displayed in every thing he set his hands to, and his open, honest countenance, soon acquired him the favour of his masters. He was intrusted with many small, confidential offices; and, when the young Count went abroad, in order to finish his education, James was one of his travelling suite.—Travelling had been very beneficial to James; it had stored his mind with various know-

ledge, given him a good address, and polished his manners; but—what is still better—it had not corrupted his good, honest heart. When he returned, Count Eichburg intent upon rewarding James for his faithful services by a lucrative situation, offered him the place of butler in his town-residence; but the good man had a longing after the quiet joys of a rural life; and, as about this time a small farm belonging to Count Eichburg was quit-
ted by the tenant, James applied for it. This the Count granted him not only rent-free for life, but also allowed him such an annual supply of corn and wood as would provide for a future increase of his household. James married at Eichburg, where he lived upon the produce of his tenement, which consisted of a small but neat cottage, and an extensive garden one half of which was planted with fruit-trees, while the rest was destined for raising vegetables.

For several years James led a very happy life with his wife, who was in every respect an excellent good creature. When she died his grief was indescribable. The good man who was, himself, somewhat advanced in years, declined visibly, and his hair was bleached as with the frost of old age. His only joy in this world now was his daughter, the last surviving child of several that his wife had borne him. She was but five years old when her mother died, whose name she bore, and whose living image she was. From her earliest childhood she had been remarkably pretty; but,

as she grew up, her piety, innocence, modesty, and sincere benevolence towards every one, gave quite a peculiar charm to her beauty. Her countenance bore such an indescribable expression of goodness, that no one could look at her without thinking he beheld a being of some purer and holier sphere.

Mary had not yet completed her fifteenth year, before she already kept her father's house in the nicest order. In the sitting-room you could not perceive a grain of dust, in the kitchen all the utensils shone as brightly as new ones; and the whole house was a model of order and neatness. Besides all this she assisted her father in gardening, where she showed an indefatigable zeal; and the hours, which she thus spent in his company she counted amongst the happiest of her life: as the worthy old man by his cheerful and instructive conversation made her work appear rather an enjoyment than a labour.

Mary, who did grow up amidst herbs and flowers, and to whom her father's garden was quite a world, from a child was a great friend of fine flowers. Her father, therefore, every year sent for some seeds, bulbs, and layers of flowers not yet known to her; and permitted her to plant with flowers the borders of the vegetable-beds. By this means Mary always found an agreeable pastime for her leisure hours. Most carefully she nursed the delicate shoots; every bud, which she did not know, she would examine with marked attention, wondering what sort of a

flower would become of it; she was scarcely able to contain herself till it would unfold; and, when at last the ardently expected flower stood forth in all its splendour, she would yield herself up to an indescribable delight.

“Those are pure and innocent joys,” then good James used to say, smilingly; “many a one will spend more guldens upon finery and dress, than I do kreutzers upon seeds and flowers; and, after all, he will not procure so great and innocent a happiness to his daughter.” In fact, every month, nay every week, the garden unfolded new delights to Mary. Often she used to say in her joy, “The garden of Eden can scarcely have been more beautiful than ours.” The passers-by seldom failed to stop at the gate, in order to admire the beautiful flowers. The children of the towns-people would daily come to look in between the railings, and Mary always presented them with some flowers.

Father James being a wise man, he knew how to direct to a higher purpose his daughter's inclination for flowers. He taught her to admire the Wisdom, Goodness, and Omnipotence of the Lord, as displayed in the flowers, —their manifold shapes, the purity of their design, their fine proportions, the brightness of their hues, and the sweetness of their perfumes. He used to devote to prayer the first hours of the morning, and in consequence always rose somewhat earlier than the labours of the day required. He believed that Life had little value, if Man could not spare from his worldly affairs a couple of hours, or

at least half-hours, daily, in order to commune undisturbedly with his maker, and to think of his high destination for Heaven. In spring and summer, when the mornings were fine, he therefore would take Mary with him to the bower, where the birds warbled their joyous tunes, and whence the eye roamed about the flowering garden where dew-drops were sparkling in the golden rays of the morning-sun, and where they enjoyed a view upon the rich landscape beyond. Here he would tell her of HIM, who sends us the life-inspiring rays of the sun, who showers down rain and dew, who feeds the birds of the air, and clothes in splendour the flowers of the field. Here he would teach her to discern in the Almighty Being above a loving father, who had manifested himself to us yet more signally and kindly, than by the works of His creation—namely by sending down to us His beloved Son. Here also he taught her how to pray, praying, himself, with her from his inmost heart. Those early morning-hours contributed greatly to implant the purest piety into her young heart.

In her favourite flowers he shewed her the emblems of maidenly virtue. Once, in the earliest part of March, when, with a joyful countenance, she brought him the first violet, good James said, “In the sweet *Violet*, my dear Mary, see the image of humility, reserve, and of unpretending charity. Decked in modest and unassuming colours she prefers blossoming in the shade; and, nevertheless, from her humble retreat among the leaves,

she embalms all the air around with her sweet scent.—Thus, dearest Mary, be thou a humble violet, despising the vain splendour of ornament and gaudy dress, avoiding notice, and quietly spreading benefits over all around, till thy bloom will have passed!”

When the roses and lilies stood in full flower, and the garden appeared in its highest splendour, old James, pointing at a lily illumined with the rays of the rising sun, said to his happy child—“The *Lily*, my dear daughter, is the symbol of innocence ! Look, how beautiful, how bright and pure, she is standing there. The whitest satin is not to be compared to her snow-white petals. Happy she, whose heart is equally pure, and free of every guilty thought.—Yet, this purest of all colours is also the one most difficult to preserve in its pureness. Easily a lily is injured ;—you may not touch it with a rude hand, if you wish to keep it spotless.—Thus a word, a passing thought even, may do an irreparable injury to innocence!”—“On the other hand,” he continued, “the *Rose*, dear Mary, represents modesty. More beautiful than the hue of the rose is the blush of modesty. Honour to her, who blushes at every immodest word, and who, from the roses that suffuse her cheeks, takes a warning against the dangers of sinning ! Cheeks which will blush easily, long remain bright and rosy ; those, however, which can no longer blush, soon will become pale and wan, and decay in the grave before their time.” Then, gathering some roses and lilies, worthy James united them to a *bouquet*, which

he gave to Mary, saying: "As Lilies and Roses are sister-flowers that naturally belong to each other, and, in bouquets and wreaths, will go together better than any other: so, my dear child, Innocence and Modesty are twin-sisters, inseparable from each other. In order to support Innocence, the Lord gave her a warning sister: Modesty. Never lose Modesty, dear Mary, and thou wilt ever remain innocent. So long thy heart remains pure, like the spotless lily, thy cheeks will resemble roses. ."

The brightest ornament of the garden was a dwarf-apple-tree, not higher than a rose-bush, which rose from a small round bed in the midst of the garden. Father James had planted it on the day Mary was born, and the tree annually brought the finest apples of a golden hue, streaked with purple rays. Once it blossomed so richly that it was quite clothed with bloom. Every morning Mary hied to the garden, to gaze at her dear tree. "Oh! how beautiful," she exclaimed in her delight,—“how finely rosy and white! It is as though the whole tree were but one great nosegay.”

One morning, however, when she came down, the rime had destroyed all the blossoms. They looked already yellow and seared, and shrivelled. At this mournful aspect Mary wept; but her father said—“Thus the pleasures of sin destroy the flower of youth. Oh my child! tremble of seduction! Look, if it were to be thus with thee; if the bright hopes which I now place upon thee, were to be destroyed in such a way, not only for a year, but for life—alas! then I should have to shed more bitter tears than

those thou art weeping at present. Thenceforth I should not know another hour of happiness, and with tearful eyes I should descend to the grave!"—At the mere idea his eyes were overflowing, and his words made a deep impression upon Mary.

Under the eyes of so sensible and tender a guardian, Mary grew up amidst the flowers of the garden—blooming like a rose, innocent like the lily, humble as a violet, and promising, like a fruit-tree in the richest blow.

The old man had always been looking with satisfaction upon his dear garden, whose fruits so well repaid his care; yet, his heart was full of a higher joy, when he beheld his daughter, who rewarded his instructions with still costlier fruits.

CHAPTER II.

MARY AT THE CASTLE.

ONE lovely morning, early in May, Mary had been in a neighbouring wood, cutting hazel-twigs, and willow-swilches, of which her father, when he had no other work on hands, used to make the nicest little baskets. There she found the first lilies of the valley some of which, she gathered, and made up into two nosegays, the one destined for her father, the other for herself. As she was returning home on a narrow footpath between luxuriant

meadows, she perceived the Countess of Eichburg, with her daughter; who for the greater part of the year used to live in town, but had arrived a few days ago at the Count's seat, in order to spend there the fine season.

When Mary, by the flutter of white robes, and the green parasols, saw that she was approaching great ladies, she modestly drew aside, and respectfully stopped till they should have passed.

"Why, there are may-flowers already?" cried the young Countess, who had a passion for this flower. Mary immediately offered one of her bouquets to each of the two ladies, who took it with great pleasure. The older one pulled out her gold-embroidered purse, in order to give something to the girl, which she however declined, saying—"Oh no, your Ladyship has been so bountiful to my father and me, that I beg you will allow a poor girl to afford you this little pleasure, without thinking of a reward."

The Countess smiled kindly at her, and told Mary to bring her daughter some of these flowers now and then. Mary complied, and every morning, so long as the may-lilies were in flower, brought some to the castle. Young Countess Amalia came to like Mary better every day, on account of her sound common sense, her good temper, and her modest, artless behaviour. After this period even, she often sent for Mary, in order to enjoy her company; and many times gave her to understand, that, liking her so much for a companion, she desired to take her into her service.

Meanwhile the anniversary of Countess Amalia's birthday approached. Mary thought of offering her a small rustic gift. She had so often brought bouquets that she could not well offer any more flowers, and therefore turned to an other idea. Her father had, last winter, woven some charming work-baskets for ladies, and given the nicest of all to Mary. It was made after a beautiful model, which he had got from town; and the imitation had been particularly successful. Mary determined upon lining this basket with flowers, and presenting it to the young Countess on her birthday. Her father, whose permission she asked, assented readily, and besides added to his little master-piece the name of Countess Amalia, together with her family arms, very artistically interwoven with the basket-work.

On the morning of the birthday, Mary gathered the most beautiful roses of her garden, the finest white, red and blue gilliflowers, brown wall-flowers, pinks and carnations, and many other pretty flowers, which she arranged with green boughs, so as to produce the happiest contrast of the various colours. The sides of the basket she enlaced with a light garland of rose-buds and moss, the Lady's name, however, she enclosed in a wreath of forget-me-nots. The variety of fresh rose-buds, set off by soft green moss, and blue forget me-nots, made an excellent effect on the fine white texture of the basket; and the whole was really charming. Even grave James, with a well-contented smile, praised Mary's taste; and, when

she prepared to go, said, "Stay yet a while, that I may look at it a little longer."

Mary carried the basket to the castle, and, there, handed it over, with her best wishes, to the young Countess, whom she found at the toilet, with her chambermaid standing behind her, occupied to dress her hair for the festivities of the occasion. Countess Amalia was overjoyed at the gift, and scarcely could find words sufficiently to praise the beauty of the flowers, and the neatness of the basket.—"Dear child," she said,— "I am afraid you have pillaged your garden, in order to present me with such a profusion of flowers!—What a nice basket! Your father must be exceedingly clever at such work. I never saw anything half so fine. Just come up to Ma with me, will you?" With this she took Mary by the hand, and led her up to her mother's sitting-room.

"Oh, do but look, Ma," she cried upon entering her mother's room,— "what a charming present Mary has brought me! You never saw finer flowers, nor a lovelier basket."

The Countess, also, was much pleased with the basket. "Indeed," she said,— "it is very beautiful. I should like to see a painting of it. The basket with the flowers, still sparkling with the morning-dew upon them, would make as fine a flower-piece, as ever the greatest artist has painted. It reflects great honour upon Mary's taste,— and more still upon her good heart."

"Stay a moment, my dear child," she said to Mary,

while she beckoned her daughter to the adjoining room, and there continued: "We cannot dismiss Mary without a reward;—what, do you think, would best suit her?"—

Amalia mused for a moment, and then said, "One of my gowns, I should imagine, would suit her best; for instance, if you will allow me, the one with the pretty pink and white flowers on a darkgreen ground; it is quite new, as I have scarcely worn it two or three times; but I have grown out of it, and it would be a splendid holiday-dress for Mary. She may fit it for herself, as she is very clever at her needle. So, if you do not think it too much, I shall give it to her."

"By all means!" said the Countess;—"if you will present people with anything, always first ask yourself whether it will be of use to them. That green gown with the nice flowers will suit the little gardener perfectly well."

"Now go, my good children;" said the Countess, returning with Amalia, "and take care of the flowers, that they may not fade till dinner-time. We shall have much company at table, to-day, when the basket will be the finest ornament of the room, and serve the purpose of a plate. Good b'ye, my dear Mary; the care of making my acknowledgments I leave to Amalia."

The young lady hastened back to her room with Mary, and there ordered her maid to fetch the green gown. Harriet—this was her name—hesitated, and said, "Surely your Ladyship will not put on that gown to-day?"

"No!" replied Amalia; "I shall give it to Mary."—

“Give it to Mary?” Harriet repeated pettishly;—“does Mylady know of it?”

“Bring the gown,” said Amalia sharply—, “the rest concerns but me!”

Harriet quickly turned round, in order to hide her vexation, and left the room. Her face was glowing with rage, as she drew the gown from amongst the others; and she said: “Would, I could tear them all! That infamous flower girl! First she almost gets me out of favour with missis, and then she robs me of this gown; for all the cast-off clothes are my perquisites. Oh, how I detest her! With what a pleasure I could scratch out her eyes!” As she dared not show her rage openly, she hid it, as best she could, behind a smiling face, and quickly returned with the gown.

“Dear Mary,” Amalia said, “I have received costlier presents to-day, than your basket, but not a more agreeable one. The flowers of this gown certainly are not so pretty as yours; but I think, for my sake you will not refuse them. Wear the gown in my memory, and give my love to your father.”

Mary took the gown, kissed the young lady’s hand, and retired.

Harriet continued her work, almost bursting with vexation, envy, and rage. It cost her not a little self-command, not to let the young Countess, whose hair she was dressing, feel her indignation.

“Are you vexed, Harriet?” said Amalia mildly.

“Oh no! I should be very stupid, if I were to fret because you are so kind.”

“You talk very reasonably!” replied the young Countess, and all I wish is, that you may think as you talk!”

Meanwhile Mary hastened home, overjoyed with her beautiful present. Her sage father, however, was not equally pleased with it; he said, shaking his silvery head, “I wish you had not carried the basket to the castle. Though the gown be very valuable, as a gift of our noble lady; yet I am afraid, others will become envious of your good fortune; and, what would be the worst, it may make you vain. Therefore be well on your guard, my dear Mary, that we may at least avoid the worst misfortune. Modesty and decency are better ornaments for a young girl, than the most beautiful and richest clothes.”

CHAPTER III.

THE STOLEN RING.

SCARCELY had Mary, after having tried on the pretty gown, folded it up again, and shut it away, when the young Countess, pale and trembling, and nearly out of breath, entered the little room.

“For God’s sake, Mary,” she said,—“what have you done? My mothers diamond-ring is lost! No one but you has been in the room. Oh, pray! return it quickly, or else it will be a shocking affair for you! Give it up at once, and then the matter may yet be hushed up.”

Mary was almost frightened to death.—“Oh Lord,” “she said, what is this! I have not taken the ring. I did not even see a ring in the room, and never left my place while I was there.”

“Mary, for your own sake I beg you, give me the ring. You do not know the value of the jewel in it. The ring has cost almost a thousand dollars. If you had known this, you certainly would not have taken it. You surely thought it a bauble of small value. Return it, and all will be forgiven as a youthful indiscretion.”

Mary wept. “Indeed” she said,—“I do not know of any ring. I never dared but touch other people’s property, much less take away what does not belong to me. My father has too often told me never to commit such a thing.”

At this moment James entered the room. He had been working in the garden; but when he saw the young Countess walk so hastily towards his house, he left everything, in order to hear what was the matter. “Gracious heaven, how can this be?” he exclaimed, after having heard of what his daughter stood accused. The good old man was so much shaken with this news, that he was obliged to grasp at the table, and to sit down upon a form.

“My child,” he cried, “consider, that the theft of such a ring is a crime which the law punishes with death. But this is the lesser consideration. Think of the Lord’s commandment: *Thou shalt not steal*. For such an act we are not only responsible to Man, but to a much higher master, the Almighty Judge, who reads our hearts, and

whom you cannot deceive by lies and subterfuges. If you have forgotten the Lord, and His holy commandments, if temptation has made you forgetful of my precepts, if your eyes have been dazzled by the glitter of gold and jewels—in short, if you have committed the bad action with which you stand charged,—do not deny it; confess, and return the ring. This is the only way still open, to ward off, as much as possible, the consequences of your fault.”

With a voice broken by tears, Mary exclaimed: “Dear father, surely—surely—I never set eyes upon the ring. If I were to find such a ring in the street, I should not be quiet till I had given it back to the owner. Indeed I have not it.”

“Look,” began her father again, “look at this angelic being, young Countess Amalia, who has come down to us, only to save you yet from the hands of justice. Think how kind she has been with you, in proof of which she has just now made you such a rich present;—she certainly has not deserved it, to be put off with lies that can only end in your own ruin! If you have taken the ring, own it at once, and our noble mistress will intercede, to ward off the punishment you have incurred. Mary, your father conjures you to acknowledge the truth candidly!”

“Oh, father,” exclaimed Mary, “yourself know that in all my life I never took a farthing’s worth from any one. I should not venture to pull an apple from a tree, or a handful of grass from a meadow belonging to others; much less would I lay my hands on a thing so costly.

Do, believe me, dear father! I never told you a lie in all my life!"

James insisted still: „Mary, behold these grey locks! Do not send me down into my grave, mourning! Spare me this disgrace! Speak before God, to whom I hope soon to come, and who will not allow thieves to enter His heavenly kingdom—did you take the ring? By your own salvation I beseech you, tell the truth!"

With tearful eyes Mary looked up to heaven, clasped her hands, and cried: "God knows, I did not take the ring! As I hope for salvation, I have it not."

"Well, I believe you," replied James. "You would not tell a falsehood to the face of heaven, of the noble Countess here, and of your old father. And as I am now convinced of your innocence, my mind is at rest. Be composed, my dear child, and do not be afraid! There is only one misfortune we have to fear, and this is sin! Compared to this, imprisonment and death are as nothing. Whatever may now befall us, and if all men forsake, and be against us; the Lord will stand our friend; he will save us, and bring our innocence to light, here or hereafter."

The young Countess dried a tear which had started to her eyes, and said: "Hearing you talk thus, my good friends, I cannot believe you guilty of this robbery. Yet again, if I consider all the circumstances, I cannot think it possible but that you must have the ring! Mother recollects so distinctly having placed it upon her work-table, immediately before I entered the room with Mary,

who will testify, herself, that I never came near it. During all the time I was conversing with Ma in the next room, Mary was there alone; and no one else has been there, either before, or after her. After our departure my mother locked the door, in order to dress; and afterwards, when she had done, and wanted but to put on the ring,—it was gone! For greater certainty my mother searched the whole room herself, she even took the precaution not to allow any one of our servants, nor even me, to enter the room, until she had searched every corner twice or three times. But all in vain: Who can have the ring now?”—

“This is altogether above my conception!” said the father. “The Lord intends a heavy trial for us. Still, whatever may be in store for us,”—he continued with uplifted eyes—“behold, oh Lord, here I am. If Thou wilt grant me but Thy countenance, I shall be contented.”

“Indeed,”—said the young Countess,—“I shall return with a heavy heart. This is a mournful birthday! It will be a dreadful affair. As yet my mother has not told anybody but me of the matter, in order to save Mary from disgrace, but the thing can not longer remain a secret. If Ma do not wear the ring to day, Pa, whom we expect to dinner from town, will miss it immediately. He presented it to her on the day I was born, and she has worn it as yet every anniversary of my birthday. She expects me to bring it back with me.—Farewell, my friends,” she added. “I will certainly tell her that I think you in-

nocent of the theft; but who will believe me!" With a mournful countenance and streaming eyes the amiable young lady left the house. Father and daughter were too much dismayed, to think of seeing her home.

After her departure James sat down on a form, rested his head on the hand, and cast his eyes to the ground in deep abstraction, while big tears were chasing each other down his pale cheeks. Mary kneeled down before him, looked up into his face with tearful eyes, and said, "Oh, father, I am perfectly innocent of this crime, I assure you. Certainly, I am innocent!"

Honest James raised her up, looking for a long while into her blue eyes, and then said, "Yes, I believe in your innocence, dear Mary. Guilt cannot look so honest and open-hearted."

"Oh, father!" Mary began anew, "what will be the end of all this! What will become of us! Oh, if the consequences were to touch me alone, how willingly I should bear all. However, when I think that you will have to suffer on my account, I am wretched indeed!"

"Trust in heaven," said the father; "and be of good cheer. He who has numbered the very hairs of our heads will not allow a single one of them to be touched without His will. Whatever may betide us, it will come from the Lord—and therefore will turn out to our good, and what more can we demand?—Do not be cast down, and always adhere strictly to truth. However they may threaten, and whatever they may promise thee, do not swerve

a hair's breadth from truth, and do not injure thy conscience. A good conscience is a soft pillow—even in jail." Very probably we shall be separated; and then thy father will not longer be able to comfort thee, my poor Mary! Therefore cling the more closely to thy father in heaven. He, who shields innocence with His Almighty hands, cannot be taken from thee!"

At this moment the door was violently thrown open, and the justiciary, accompanied by his clerk, and a number of constables, entered the room. Mary uttered a piercing cry, and threw her arms round her father's neck. "Tear them asunder!" cried the justiciary, with eyes sparkling of indignation. "Handcuff the daughter, and cast her in to prison. Her father also must be locked up securely. Keep a good eye upon the house and garden, and guard them well, that no one may enter here, until I shall have closely searched everything, together with my clerk!"

Mary, who clung closely to her father, was forcibly torn from his embrace by the constables. When they manacled her, she fainted, and was carried off in a state of insensibility.

When father and daughter were brought out into the street, a crowd had already assembled round the door. The story of the ring had immediately spread through the whole town. There was a bustle and a pressure about the small gardener's cottage, as if it were on fire. The most discordant opinions were heard. All the kindness James and Mary had shown to every one could not prevent

some of those people, to whom the misfortunes of their neighbours are the greatest pleasure, to make their evil-minded comments on them. Many had envied the prosperity James and Mary enjoyed in consequence of their industry and frugality. "There one sees at last," they said, "the source of their ill-gotten wealth. Previous to this we could not understand it. But in this way there is no difficulty to live more sumptuously and to dress better than their honest neighbours."

Most of the town's-people, however, felt a sincere compassion with honest James, and his good daughter; and many were the householders and good housewives, who would say to each other: "Good heavens! How miserable we poor mortals are! The best of us is not secure of a fall. Who would have fancied this of those brave persons? Still—perhaps they are falsely accused; and in this case, may the Lord bring their innocence to light.—And if they indeed be guilty, may the Lord then assist them to become sensible of their evil courses, mend their ways, and save them from the great misery, which is threatening them. May He, by His grace, preserve us all from sinning, as there is no day passing, on which we may not possibly have a fall."

Of the children of the place, here and there some were standing together in groups, weeping. "Alas," they said, "if they are to be imprisoned, honest James will not give us any more fruit, nor good Mary any more flowers. This ought not to be done!"

CHAPTER IV.

MARY IN JAIL.

MARY had been brought into her cell nearly insensible. When she at length recovered her senses, she wept, sobbed, wrung her hands, prayed: and at last, quite exhausted with fright, grief, and weeping, sank down upon her straw-pallet, where sweet slumber shut her weary eyelids. When she awoke, night had already set in, darkness was reigning around her, and she could distinguish no object. For a long while she did not know where she was. The affair of the ring she took for a frightful illusion of her dreams, and at first fancied herself home, and on her accustomed couch. She rejoiced at being freed from this horrid oppression,—but suddenly she felt the fetters on her hands, and their clanking convinced her but too sternly of the dreadful reality. Trembling she started from her straw-pallet. “Oh, Lord!” she exclaimed sinking on her knees, “what else can I do, but lift up to Thee these fettered hands! Oh, look down into this prison, and behold me kneeling before Thee. Thou dost know my innocence! Thou art the shield of innocence! Take compassion on me — on my poor old father! Oh, comfort him at least. Then I willingly shall bear a double share of sufferings.”—

At the thought of her father poor Mary shed a torrent of tears; and grief and compassion almost choked her. In this manner she wept and sobbed for a long time.

Presently the moon, which till now had been hidden behind

dark clouds, cast her rays through the small window of her cell, representing on the floor the cross bars with which it was fastened. By the reflection of the bright moonlight Mary could clearly recognise the four walls of her narrow cell, roughly erected of brickwork, and the white interstices formed by the mortar between the red bricks; she could perceive the low wall, raised in one of the corners instead of a table, as well as the earthen jar and bowl, which had been placed on it, and she could even distinguish every single straw composing the truss which formed her couch. As soon as the visible darkness about Mary had disappeared, she felt somewhat relieved. The aspect of the moon made an impression upon her, like that of an old friend. She said: "Art thou coming, dear moon, to look after thy old friend. Oh! when thou didst shine into my small bed-chamber through the green vine-leaves of the window;—at that time thou wast much brighter and prettier than now, when thou must force thy way through these dark and dismal bars.—Or dost thou perhaps mourn with me?—Certainly, I never should have imagined, that a time would come, when I should behold thee under such circumstances!—How may be my poor father at this moment?—Perhaps he is lying awake also, and weeping and sighing like me?—Would, I could see him but for a moment! Thou, dear moon, art perhaps looking into his prison at present! Oh, if thou couldst but speak, and tell him, how his Mary is weeping and grieving for him!"



“But, how foolish I talk in my grief! Forgive me these vain words, oh my Heavenly Father! Thou, oh Lord, dost see into the prison of my father! Thou seest us both, and searchest our hearts! Thy Almighty hand is not to be stayed by walls, or iron-bars. Oh, do Thou comfort him in his trials!”

But now Mary perceived that her cell was full of a sweet perfume. Last morning a half-opened rosebud, together with some other flowers, had remained after adorning the flower-basket, and these she had tied up to a nosegay, which she stuck to her bosom. These flowers now were exhaling the sweetest smells. “Are you here still, my dear flowers?” she said, when she beheld the nosegay; “and were you also obliged to go to prison with me, you harmless creatures? How could you deserve such a lot? However, this is a comfort to me, that I am as innocent of my captivity, as you of yours!”

Taking the bouquet from her bosom, she gazed at it in the rays of the moon. "Alas," she said, "last morning, when I cut this rose-bud in my garden, and these forget-me-nots on the banks of the neighbouring stream,—who would then have imagined I should be in prison on the evening! — When I tied that chain of flowers round the basket, who would have thought that on the same day I should bear these iron chains? So changeable is every thing on earth! — Thus no one knows how soon his fate may be entirely altered, and to what dreadful events his most innocent actions may give rise! Man has good reason to recommend himself to the Lord's protection on every new morning!

She wept anew; and her tears trickled down upon the rosebud and the forget-me-nots, glistening like dew-drops in the rays of the moon. "He, who does not forget the flowers, and is nourishing them with dew and rain," she continued, "will not forsake me either. Oh, Lord, fill my father's heart, and mine, with Thy consolations, as Thou dost the cups of the thirsty flowers with the pure dews of heaven!"

The recollection of her father made her tears flow anew. "Oh, thou good man!" she sobbed, "when I am looking at this nosegay, — how many words of the discourses thou didst hold me on the flowers, are returning to my memory! As this *rose-bud* unfolded amidst thorns, so joys will blossom also out of my sorrows! He, who a short time ago should have tried to draw this opening rose from

its firmly closed bud, would certainly have destroyed it. The Lord has unfolded these tender, purple petals one after the other, as with a soft, mild finger, and breathed this sweet fragrance into their interior. He will also direct me in my misfortunes, and unclothe the blessings they contain! So I will patiently wait until the right time shall have come!

"These *forget-me-nots* put me in mind of their maker! No, Almighty Creator of these flowers, I shall never forget Thee, as Thou dost not forget me!—These tender flowers are of a heavenly blue, and heaven will be my comfort in all the sorrows of this valley of tears!

"There is a fragrant *lupin* with its soft white and scarlet petals! As this slender plant is rising at the neighbouring stick, without which it would trail in the dust, and thus joyfully mounts above the soiling earth, as on the wings of a butterfly,—so I shall cling closely to Thee, oh Lord, and joyously rise above the trammels and sorrows of this world.

"This *reseda* is it, particularly, which fills this prison with sweet fragrance. Mild, lovely flower, even him, who does cut thee off, thou wilt please with thy perfume. Like thee, I will also love those, who tore me out of my garden, and cast me into this prison.

"Here is a sprig of *evergreen*. This plant preserves its freshness even in winter; and, during the colds of this ungenial season, shows the beautiful, bright colour of hope! Thus I will not give up hope even now, at the

time of my misfortunes. He, who is able to preserve this little plant in the midst of the tempests of winter, when it is covered beneath snow and ice, will also preserve me amidst the tempests of life!”

“Here also are *laurels*. They remind me of the immortal laurels of Heaven, which are destined for all, who have suffered on earth patiently and courageously. I behold it now, surrounded with a crown of golden rays, this bright, immortal wreath of victory! The flowers of this earth will fade, like all its joys, and soon decay. But, after its short sufferings, eternal and never fading bliss and splendour are awaiting us above!”

Suddenly a dark cloud obscured the moon. Mary could no longer see her flowers, and a frightful darkness reigned in the cell. She began to tremble again. But soon the cloud passed, and the moon shone clear and bright, as before. “Thus”, said Mary,—“Innocence may be darkened for a while; but soon she will appear again in all her brightness and beauty. Thus the Lord will at last bring my innocence to light, though it be obscured at present by a cloud of suspicion, and make it victorious against all false accusations.”

Mary now laid down again on her truss of straw, and fell asleep with an assured and comforted mind, pleasant dreams lightening and softening her slumber. She dreamt: she was walking in the moon-light, in an unknown garden, surrounded by a wilderness of dark pines, but of an inexpressible beauty and loveliness. She

had never seen the moon shine so brightly and spendidly, and all the flowers of the garden looked sweeter and more beautiful in the light of her silvery rays. Suddenly, she beheld her father in this enchanted place. The moon shone upon his venerable countenance animated by a contented smile. She hastened up to him, and fell on his breast, where she shed the sweetest tears with which her cheeks were still moist when she awoke next morning.

CHAPTER V.

MARY BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL.

MARY had scarcely opened her eyes on the morrow of her imprisonment, when a constable appeared in her cell, in order to lead her before the tribunal. She shuddered, when she entered the gloomy, vaulted hall of justice, lighted up by antique windows with small hexagonal panes. The bailiff was sitting in a large arm-chair, covered with cloth of the colour of blood,—the clerk occupying a seat at an enormous table blackened by time. The justiciary asked her a great many questions, which she answered according to truth. She wept, sobbed, and asserted her innocence. However, the justice said, “You will not deceive me by your acting; I never shall take for possible what is not so. There has been no one in the room; no one, but you, can have purloined the ring;—so, confess at once!”

Mary repeated her deposition with a voice choked with tears. "I cannot speak otherwise! I do not know anything of a ring; I never saw it, and never took it!"

"The ring has been seen in your hands!" the judge continued. "What do you say to this?" Mary persisted it was impossible, upon which the justice rung a bell, when—Harriet was led in.

Harriet, in her spite for having lost the gown, and with the view of ruining Mary in the favour of her mistress, had been telling the servants of the castle: "No one but that minx of a gardener's girl can have the ring. When I saw her coming down stairs she looked at a ring with jewels, which she held in her hand. The moment, however, she perceived me, she put it into her pocket. I thought it suspicious at once; still, I would not act rashly, and did not mention it. Perhaps, I thought, the ring has been given to her, like so many other things. If she have stolen it, however, there certainly will be a noise about it, and then it will be time to speak. I am so glad I have not been in Mylady's room to day, or else, such wretches as that hypocrite Mary, might yet have thrown a suspicious light upon other honest people."

Harriet had been taken at her word, and now she was to verify her assertions before the tribunal. Though her heart beat almost audibly, and her knees shook under her, when she entered the hall, and the justiciary warned her to speak the truth before Heaven, yet, that bad girl gave no hearing to the words of the justice, or

to the voice of her own conscience. She thought by herself: If I were to acknowledge now, to have asserted a falsehood, I might be turned out of service, or even imprisoned myself!—She, therefore, persisted in her lies, and boldly told Mary to her face: “You *did* steal the ring; I saw it in your hands.”

Mary was horror-struck at hearing this falsehood. Still, she did neither abuse nor reproach her enemy. She had but tears to oppose her, and said, with a voice rendered almost inaudible by emotion, “It is not true; you did not see the ring with me. How may you utter such a horrible falsehood, and ruin me, who never wronged you!”

However, Harriet did not mind her;—she was looking only to her own worldly advantage; and her envy and spite against Mary had not yet cooled down. She repeated her false account, with a number of minute details, founded solely on her own imagination, and then, at a sign of the justice, was led out of the hall.

“You stand convicted!” said the justice now. “All circumstances unite to tell against you. The maid of the young Countess has seen the ring in your possession. Now, speak, what have you done with it.”

Mary still persisted she had not taken the ring. Upon this the justice ordered her to be flogged, till her blood flowed. Mary cried, prayed, and repeatedly asserted her innocence I but, in vain: they maltreated her barbarously.

At length she was brought back to her prison: pale, trem-

bling, and bleeding. Her wounds caused her a horrible pain, and, for the greater part of the night, she was lying sleepless on her hard straw-pallet—weeping, sobbing, sighing, and praying to the Lord, who, at last, sent her a refreshing slumber.

Next day Mary, by order of the justice, was brought again before the tribunal. Since all his rigour had been of no avail, he tried the effects of kindness, and of the prospects of advantages he held out to her, in order to induce her to make an open confession. “You have forfeited your life!” he said, “you deserve to die by the sword of the executioner. But, if you will confess where you have hidden the ring, no bad consequences shall ensue. The flogging you have suffered will then be considered as a sufficient punishment, and you as well, as your father will be allowed to return peaceably to your dwelling. Now, consider,—you have to choose between life and death! Look, I mean you well. Of what use will be the stolen ring to you, when your head lies bleeding at your feet?”—Still, Mary persisted in her first deposition.

The justice, who had seen how fervently she loved her father, continued, “If you will still remain obdurate, and not even lay any value upon your life, respect at least your father’s silvery locks! Do you want to see them stained with his life-blood, and his head fall by the axe of the executioner? No one but he, can have persuaded you to persist so obdurately in your system of falsehood? Do not you think this may cost him his head?”

Mary was so much frightened by these words, that she almost fainted away. "Confess you have stolen the ring", said the judge; "one word, nay, the short syllable 'Yes!' may save your life, and that of your father!"—

This was a dreadful temptation to Mary. For a long while she remained silent. Once she had a mind to say, she had taken the ring, but lost it on her way home. But then she thought again, "no, it is better after all, to adhere to truth. To lie would be to sin! No consideration shall make me commit sin—be it even that of saving my father's life and mine. I shall obey Thee, oh Lord, and confidently trust to Thee for the rest." Then, in great emotion, but with a clear voice, she said, "If I were to say, I had stolen the ring, I should tell a falsehood; and I would not tell one to save me from death. Still"—she continued—"if blood must flow, spare at least my father's grey hairs! For him I will joyfully suffer death."

These words produced a great emotion amongst all, who heard them. They even went to the heart of the justice, however callous and insensible he had become in the course of his grave vocation. Silently he gave the sign to conduct Mary back to her prison.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER JAMES VISITS MARY IN PRISON.

THE justiciary was now at a loss how to proceed farther. "This is the third day", he said to the clerk on the follow—

ing morning, and we do not know more of the case than in the first hour. If I could but see a possibility that any one else had stolen the ring, then I should willingly believe the girl not guilty. I never experienced such an obstinacy in so young a criminal. Yet, all circumstances are so clearly against her, that it cannot be otherwise;—she must have stolen the ring”!

Once more he went to see the Countess, and inquire about all the circumstances of the case. Harriet also was examined again. For nearly the whole day he shut himself up with the papers of the case, poring over every word Mary had said during her examination. Finally, after nightfall, he sent for Mary’s father, who was led to the judge’s study from the prison where he was confined.

“James”, he commenced, “I know I am reputed a rigorous magistrate. Still, no one can say I wronged him willingly in all my life. As regards your daughter, I trust you know me better, than to think I should like to take away her life. Still, according to the evidence, she cannot but have committed this robbery, which is a capital offence. The case is put beyond all doubt by the evidence of the lady’s maid. Now, if the ring were to be restored, and the loss made up in this way, she might yet be saved on account of her youth. Were she, however, to continue in her system of obstinately denying everything, the case would be quite a different one, her iniquity would make up for her want of experience, and I should be obliged to pass sentence of death. Now, for these

reasons I wish you would pay her a visit, and persuade her to restore the ring to the rightful owner; and I pledge my word, that in this—but, mind, only in *this* case, she shall not be executed, but be left off with a milder punishment. You are her father; you can do with her what you like!—If *you* do not move her to a confession, one must think you are either conniving at, or even partaking of, her crime! Once more I tell you: if the ring be not forthcoming, no good will come of it.”

James said, “I will speak to her with all my heart; but I know, beforehand, that, as she has not stolen the ring, she cannot confess the deed. However, I shall use every means in my power, to make her do so, and I consider it a great favour to be allowed to see my poor child once more, before her death, if so she is to be executed, notwithstanding her innocence.”

Without another word the old man was led by a turnkey to the prison of his daughter; his conductor placed a smoky lamp upon the low wall, where an earthen bowl containing Mary’s supper, and an earthen-ware jug with water, stood untouched, and then left the cell, locking the door after him.

Mary was lying asleep on her straw-pallet, with her face turned to the wall. Awakened by the gloomy light of the lamp she turned round. As soon as she perceived her father, she uttered a piercing cry, bounding up from her couch; and, throwing herself on her father’s bosom, nearly fainted with emotion. He sat down beside her, on the

straw, and embraced her closely. For a long time both remained silent, while their tears were flowing down in a mingled stream.

At last James recollecting his commission, began to speak as he was requested to do. He was however interrupted by Mary, who said, "Dear father, do you—*you*, doubt my innocence? Oh Lord", she continued, sobbing, "is there no being in this world, that does not take part against me!—Dear father, believe me, you have not brought up a thief."

"Do not be distressed, my dear child; I believe you!" said honest James. "It was but to obey the orders I had received, that I questioned you in this way."—And both were silent again.

James looked at his daughter. Her cheeks were pale and emaciated, her eyes red and swollen from continual weeping, and her golden locks, which she had in such a profusion, that she might have entirely screened herself beneath them, were dishevelled. "Poor child", he said, "the Lord has inflicted a heavy trial on you! And, I am afraid the worst,—the most dreadful portion, is yet to come!—Perhaps they will put your youthful head to the block."

"Dear father," said Mary, "as far as regards me, my mind is at ease; but your grey locks—oh God—if I should see them fall by the axe of the executioner!"

"For me you need be under no apprehension, my dear child", said the old man. "They will not hurt me! You,

however,—though I still hope for the best—you may yet be brought to”——

“Oh, then”, Mary joyfully interrupted her father. Then the heaviest load is taken from my soul—then all is well. Dear father, surely, I do not fear death. I shall go to the Lord, to my Saviour! My mother, also, I shall see again in heaven! How happy I shall be!”

These words went to the heart of the old man, who sobbed like a child. “Well, thanks to God”, he said at length, joining his hands, “thanks to God, for rendering you so composed. Though it be hard—very hard, for an old man near his tomb, for a loving father, to lose in this way his only, his dearly beloved child, his sole comfort, the last support, the crown and pride of his declining age! Still”, he continued, with an utterance broken by sobs, “Lord, Thy will be done. Thou dost demand a heavy sacrifice from the heart of a father. But, to Thee I offer it willingly. Take her! Into Thy hands I commend her, the most precious treasure I possess on earth; there she will be best provided for. To Thy infinitely more loving heart I recommend her; there will be her best support.—Alas, dear Mary, it will be better for you to die by the sword of the executioner, than to live in this perverted world, perhaps to be led astray, to be robbed of your innocence, and enticed into sin and vice. Forgive me for talking in this way! As yet you are virtuous, and deserving to become one of the angels of heaven; still, the world is bad, very bad; nature is weak, and even angels have been

found failing. So, if such should be the holy will of the Lord, meet your death with a good heart. You will suffer innocently. This is the most desirable death, however cruel it may be. You will then, from this rough soil, be transplanted into the garden of Eden, like a pure, spotless lily!"

His words were interrupted by a flood of tears. After a while he continued, "There is yet one point, on which I am desirous to speak to you. Harriet has been the principal witness against you. She has affirmed upon oath to have seen the ring in your hands. If you are to be executed her evidence will have been the cause of your death. Still, I wish you would forgive her, and not take any hatred over with you to the next world! On your straw-pallet, in this noisome cell, and loaded with these heavy chains, you are happier than she, who is living at that noble castle, dressed in silks and laces, and enjoying every luxury and worldly consideration. Better by far, to die innocently like you, than to live in iniquity like her. Forgive her, dearest Mary, as your saviour has forgiven his enemies. Will you promise me to do so?"—Mary promised it.

"And now", continued her father, as he heard the approaching steps of the turnkey, "I recommend you to the grace of the Lord, and to your Saviour, who was also executed innocently, like a malefactor! And, if you are to see my countenance no more, if the present should be the last time I behold yours, think, that I shall soon follow you to heaven! For, a voice in my heart is telling me I shall not long survive you."

The turnkey entered, requesting James to leave his daughter. Mary retained him in a close embrace; but he tenderly disengaged himself,—her senses left her, and she sank back upon her couch.

James was led back to the justiciary's room. On entering there he raised his right hand up to heaven, exclaiming, quite beyond himself, "before the Almighty Judge I attest her innocence. My child is not a thief."

"I could almost believe it, myself", said the justice, "however, unluckily I dare not judge from your asseverations, and those of your daughter, but must pass sentence according to the nature of the evidence, and as the letter of the law ordains."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SENTENCE, AND ITS EXECUTION.

MEANWHILE, the inhabitants of the town and the castle were anxious to learn how Mary's case would be decided. All well-meaning people trembled for her life, as, in those times, theft was punished with the utmost severity, and many had been executed for having stolen sums amounting to not a tenth part of the value of the ring. The Count wished for nothing better, how to find Mary innocent; he perused personally all records of the evidence against her, closeted himself for hours with the bailiff, but could not persuade himself of her guiltlessness, since it appeared impossible to him, that any other person could

have purloined the ring. Both his lady and daughter, begged with tearful eyes, not to take Mary's life away. Her old father was praying unceasingly to the Lord, to bring his daughter's innocence to light. Every time Mary became aware of the turnkey's approach from the rattling of his keys, she thought the judges were coming to announce her the sentence of death. Finally, while all this was passing, the head's-man occupied himself with cleaning the place of execution of the weeds with which it was overgrown.

On one of her walks, Harriet beheld him at his work, which struck her to the very heart. She was dreadfully agitated;—at supper she was very pale, and did not touch a morsel, and any one could perceive that she was a prey to some secret anxiety. During the following night she slept very little, and her dreams were more than once disturbed by the vision of Mary's bloody head. Her evil conscience left her no repos, neither by day, nor by night. Yet, as this perverted girl had no idea but the gratification of her senses, and of her worldly desires, she could not find in herself the noble courage of mending her faults by an open confession.

At last the judge passed his sentence; Mary, guilty of an odious theft, and of obstinately denying it, for which offences she deserved capital punishment, in particular consideration of her youth, and her otherwise spotless character, was to be confined for life in a house of correction; her father, who had participated in her crime and obstinacy, either directly, or by the bad education he

had given her, was to be banished for life from the Count's dominions, and the property of both was to be sold, in order to cover by the proceeds the law expenses, and indemnify the Count in some degree for the damage sustained by the lost of the ring.—The Count mitigated the sentence with respect to Mary, so as to banish her from his dominions, together with James, and, with a view to avoid all further noise about the matter, he ordered to expel them from his dominions on the break of next day.

When Mary, and her father, conducted by constables, were passing by the gates of the castle, Harriet came out. As the affair had taken such a favourable issue, according to the opinion of that unfeeling, frivolous girl; and one quite above her expectations, she at once recovered all her former levity. Though it would have appeared to her somewhat hard, to see Mary executed; yet, to see her exiled in this way, was exactly what she had always been desiring. She had been in a perpetual anxiety, lest Mary should supplant her in her situation. This anxiety now had entirely disappeared, and all her former hatred against Mary, her malice, and her bad heart, had regained their mastery. Once Countess Amalia, on seeing Mary's basket standing on a chest of drawers, had said to her "Take this basket out of my sight! It awakens too disagreeable recollections in my heart, and I cannot see it without a painful emotion." Harriet had removed the basket, and now brought it out with her. "There, take back your present", she addressed Mary. "My lady will not keep anything that comes from

such hands. Your glory is gone now, like the flowers for which you made yourself paid so well; it affords me a particular pleasure to return you this basket." Upon this she threw the basket to Mary's feet, turned back to the castle, with a scornful smile, and violently slapped the gate after her.

Silently, and with tearful eyes, Mary took up the basket, and then proceeded on her way. Her father had not even a staff to support him on the journey; Mary had nothing but her basket. More than a hundred times she looked back with streaming eyes upon her homely roof as well, as upon the castle, and the spire of the parish-church, till these objects became hidden behind a wooded hill.

When the constable had left Mary with her father on the frontier of the Count's territory, deep in a dark wood, the old man, weary with grief and pain, sat down on a moss-grown rock in the shade of a venerable old oak.

"Come, my daughter", he said, taking Mary to his arms, joining her hands, and lifting them up to heaven, together with his own; "let us, before all, thank the Lord for having led us from our gloomy, close prison, into His open air and clear blue sky, as well as for having saved our lives, and returned thee, my dear child, to my arms."

Old James cast his eyes up to the blue expanse, which was brightly visible between the interstices of the green oak-leaves above them, and prayed with a loud voice.

“Dearest Father in Heaven! Thou, the sole comforter of Thy children on earth! Thou, the mighty shield of all the oppressed! Receive our united thanks for our gracious deliverance from chains, and prison, and death! Accept our thanks for all the benefits we have received from Thee, on this, our paternal soil. How could we pass this frontier, without previously looking up to Thee with grateful hearts! Behold, before touching the soil of a foreign land, we implore Thee! Look down upon a poor father, and his poor, tearful child! Take us under Thy protection! Be Thou our companion on those thorny paths on which I and this poor child probably will have to wander! Conduct us to good people, dispose their hearts to compassion; let us find a spot in this vast world of Thine, where to accomplish our pilgrimage in peace, and to die comforted. Certainly, Thou hast already prepared that spot for us, though as yet we do not know it! Thither we direct our steps, with hearts reposing and confiding in Thy goodness.

After they had both prayed thus—for Mary mentally repeated all her father’s words—their hearts became full of a holy calmness and of a high, cheerful courage.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

ON a sudden they beheld old Anthony, the Count’s gamekeeper together with whom James had, in for—

former time, accompanied the Count on his travels. He had risen before break of day, in order to shoot a stag for the Count's table.

"God bless you, James", he said, "is that you? I thought I heard you speaking, and, I see I have not been wrong. Oh, Lord, so they have turned you off after all! It is very hard to force an old man to leave his dear home!"

"As far as the blue sky extends above us", said James, "the earth is the Lord's, and everywhere His kindness is ruling supremely. Our home, however, is in heaven."

"Good God!" the forester compassionately began again. "They have turned you off as you are there. You have not even the clothes necessary for such a journey."

"He, who clothes the flowers, will also clothe us!" replied James.

"And as regards money", the forester inquired farther. "I suppose they have not given you any, either?"

"We have a good conscience", said James, "with that we are wealthier than if the rock on which we are sitting were of gold, and belonged to us."

"This is no answer!" said the forester. "You certainly have not a farthing of your own in all the world?"

"This empty basket here, at my feet", replied James, "comprises all our riches. How much, do you think, it would fetch?"

"Good god", said the forester quite distressed, "a gulden, or may be a dollar. But what is that?"

"Well then", continued James with a smile; "in this

case we shall be wealthy enough, as long as the Lord will spare me these two vigorous arms. I can make at least a hundred such baskets a year, and one hundred dollars will be quite sufficient for us, to live upon. My father, who was a basket-maker, insisted upon my learning his trade, besides that of gardening, in order to provide me with a useful occupation for the winter-months. For this I owe still thanks to him, though he has long been in his grave. He has provided for me better, than if he had left me a fortune of three thousand guildens, which would bear interest at the rate of a hundred dollars a year. A healthy mind, a healthy body, and a honest trade, are the best and surest riches in this world."

"Well", said the forester, "Heaven be praised for making you think so. I must agree with you there. Besides, I think, your knowledge of gardening may yet be turned to a good account.—But where are you going to, at present?"

"Far away from here", replied James, "where no one knows us—whereever God will conduct us."

"James", said the gamekeeper, "take this stout crabstick! It is lucky I took it with me, or you would not even have a staff on your journey! And here", he continued, drawing a small leathern purse from his pocket, "here is some money. I received it in payment for timber, at the village where I slept last night."

"Your staff," replied James, "I shall accept, and use in remembrance of a brave man. But the money I cannot

take, as you got it in payment for timber; and, in consequence, it belongs to the Count."

"Nay, old honest James!" rejoined the game keeper, "make yourself easy about this! The Count has already received his own. Some years ago I lent it to a poor man, who had lost his only cow, and could not pay the timber he had bought. I never thought of it since. Yesterday, however, he returned it unexpectedly with many thanks, as it appears his affairs have mended. This money is a regular godsend."

"Well then, I will accept it", said James, "and may the Lord make it up to you in some other way. Look here, Mary", he continued, turning to his daughter, "how kindly the Lord provides for us from the very commencement of our journey. There He sends us our good old friend,—before yet we have passed over the frontier,—who must bring us a staff, and money for our journey. Before rising from this stone, the Lord has heard my prayer. Therefore be of good cheer; God will continue to take care of us!"

Upon this the old gamekeeper with tears in his eyes, bid them farewell. "Good b'ye, honest James, good b'ye, dear Mary!" he said, shaking first the father's, and then the daughter's hand. "I have always thought you honest people, and do so still. In your case also will be proved some day the truth of the old saying '*Honesty is the best policy.*' No, no! the Lord will not forsake those, who do right, and confide in Him. Take this maxim on your way—and, God speed ye!"

In great emotion the forester turned towards Eichburg. James also rose from his seat, taking his daughter's hand, and pursuing his way through the woods, along the high-road—to seek a new home in a distant land.

CHAPTER IX.

JAMES' AND MARY'S PILGRIMAGE.

MARY and her father plodded on and on. Already they had performed on foot a distance of more than a hundred miles, without being able to find a resting-place; their little treasure also drew to an end. They lived most frugally, because they found begging inexpressibly repugnant to their feelings. At last, however, nothing remained to them but to apply for the bread of charity. From many a gate they were driven with hard words, at many others they received but a slice of bread, embittered by grumbling, and with which they had no other relish but a draught of water from the next fountain. Rarely they got some soup or vegetables in an earthenware bowl, or, perhaps some remnants of meat or pudding. But more than once Mary had to see how long the donors picked and chosed, in order to give her the smallest and worst morsel. After several days, passed without having got any cooked victuals, they had to consider themselves but too happy if they were allowed to sleep in a barn.

One day, when their road had been lying through a range of wooded hills, and no village had been visible

for a long time, the old man sank down, pale and speechless with exhaustion, at the foot of a fir-tree. Mary was almost beside herself with fright and anxiety. In vain she searched in the neighbourhood for some water,—not a drop was to be found all around. In vain she called for help; the only answer she got was from the echo. Far and near no human dwelling was visible. Quickly, though her knees were trembling under her, Mary climbed up the hill, in order to get a more extensive view from the top of it. There she beheld, far away on the opposite slope of the valley, enclosed between corn-fields and verdant meadows, a lonely farm-house, towards which she hastened as fast as her feet would carry her. She arrived at the farm quite out of breath; and with streaming eyes, and a broken voice she implored the inhabitants to lend her a helping hand for saving her father's life. The farmer and his wife were a good, compassionate, elderly couple, and easily moved by the poor girl's prayers and the dreadful agony, which was painted in every line of her pale face. The good wife said to her husband, "Won't you put a horse to our market-cart, that we may fetch that poor old body to our house?" While the farmer was occupied in the shed and the stable with taking out the cart, his wife brought out some pillows, a pitcher with water, and a glass-bottle filled with vinegar. When Mary heard, that the carriage-road round the foot of the hill was bad, and longer by at least a mile and a half, she took the vessels with vinegar and water, and hastened

back on the same way she was come, in order to be sooner with her father again.

She found him a little better, leaning against a fir-tree in a sitting posture, and extremely happy to see his Mary, whose presence he had already missed with apprehension. At length the cart arrived also, on which he was conveyed to the farm.

The farmer had a nice back-room with a closet and kitchen, which at that time were unoccupied. There he established the sick old man. His wife gave the fugitives a good bed, which Mary ceded to her father, herself being satisfied with a couch on a form, in order to be continually near him. James' illness was only exhaustion caused by the bad fare, the miserable night-quarters, and the fatigues of their journey. The good house-wife gave everything her house afforded that could serve to restore the sick man. She spared neither flour nor eggs, nor milk or butter, and even killed some old hens with which she made a nourishing broth for the exhausted old man. At a later period the farmer almost daily robbed his pigeon-house of a young pigeon. "There", he used to say to his wife, smiling, "roast it for the old fellow! Since you did not spare your hens, I must not be behindhand with you, and also contribute something!"

In former years the farmer had annually been to a neighbouring fair, together with his wife. This time, however, the worthy couple resolved to forego this pleasure, and with the money they would have spent at the merry-ma-

king, to buy some bottles of good old wine for the sick old man. Mary thanked them with tears. "Oh God", she said, "everywhere one finds good souls, and exactly on the roughest soil one often will meet with the mildest hearts."

Mary scarcely ever left her father's bed-side. But she could not bear to be idle. Being a great proficient in knitting and needlework, she was indefatigable in sewing and knitting for the farmer's wife, and never was seen without some employment or the other. The good wife was exceedingly well pleased with her zeal as well, as with her modest, humble conduct. The better food, and the care taken of James' health, were not thrown away upon him. He soon recovered so far, as to be able to leave his bed; and, as he hated idleness, he devoted his hours to his old trade of basket-making. His first product, for which Mary had fetched te hazle-and osier-switches from the woods, was a tribute of gratitude to the farmer's wife: a stout, serviceable, and pretty, handled basket, which was found to be exactly to her taste. It was of strong make; the cover displaying her initials, and the year, in pink, and on the curved outside of the basket itself, was to be seen a thatched farm-house with a couple of fir-trees near it, interwoven with the basket-work by means of many coloured switches.

The superior workmanship of the basket was a source of admiration to the whole house; and the farmer's wife was highly pleased with the gift, particularly with the allusion to her farm, which was called the fir-hill farm.

When honest James had quite recovered his health, he presented himself before the farmer and his wife, saying, "We have now been a burthen to you quite long enough, and it is high time we continue our journey." Upon this the farmer took his hand. "What crotchet is this, my dear James!" he said, "I hope we have done nothing to make you believe we desired to get rid of you. Why do you want to go? In all other respects you are such a clever man, but this is quite a senseless notion!"

The farmer's wife dried her eyes with her apron, and added, "Pray, stop with us! The season is already advanced! Look—the leaves of the hedges and trees already grow yellow and purple, and winter is near at hand! Do you want to fall ill again by your own fault?"

James assured them the only reason for his wanting to go was his unwillingness to be a burthen upon them.

"A burthen, indeed!" said the farmer; "make yourself easy on that score! You know, that in your little back-room you are not at all in our way; and, besides, you earn your keep pretty well, I fancy!"

"Certainly!" added his wife; "Mary makes it up in knitting and needle-work alone. And if James would occupy himself further with basket-making, he might turn a good penny besides. The other day, when I went to stand god-mother to the miller's babe over there, I had your pretty basket with me. All the farmers' wives who saw it, wanted to have such a one. I shall get you plenty of orders, and the work will not soon fail you, I make no doubt."

Upon this James and Mary promised to stay, which the farmer and his wife heard with the sincerest joy.

CHAPTER X.

JAMES' AND MARY'S HAPPY DAYS AT THE FIR-HILL FARM.

FROM this time James and Mary began to keep house separately in their little apartments. The room was fitted up with simple, but efficient furniture, and the kitchen furnished with some crockery. Mary thought herself very happy when she could again stand at her own hearth, and cook the victuals for the little household. They led a very happy life. While James was weaving baskets, and Mary knitting or sewing, the conversation never flagged. Many an evening they spent in the front-room with the farmers' people, who would listen with the most marked and pleased attention to James sensible conversation, and the instructive stories he used to tell. In this way the wintry season with its storms passed in a very agreeable manner.

Close to the farm was an extensive garden, which, however, was not cultivated to the best advantage. The farmer's time, and his wife's, was so exclusively taken up with agricultural labours, that they could not bestow great attention upon it; besides that they were not very expert in gardening. Now James undertook to get up a regular garden. To this end he had prepared everything in last autumn, and scarcely had the snows disappeared in

spring, when he and Mary set to work, and stuck to it from morning till nightfall. The garden was divided into beds which were planted with vegetables, and enclosed in plat-bands of honey-flowers, while the walks between each bed were strewn with gravel. Mary had been unceasing in her instances, till her father had, from the neighbouring town, where he used to buy his seeds, also provided some rose-bushes, lilies, and auriculas as well as seeds of gillyflowers and other ornamental plants. She cultivated again the most beautiful flowers, many of which had never before been seen in this rough, sequestered district. Soon the garden was so beautifully verdant, and full of flowers, that it imparted quite a gay aspect to the wild, wooded valley. The neighbouring orchard, too, thrived better under James' hands, and produced more and better fruit. There was a blessing on everything he put his hands to.

The old gardener had quite recovered his good humour. He began anew to make his observations on the flowers and shrubs. Still, he rarely repeated his old sayings, since he used always to take a new view of everything.

For several days in the early part of spring Mary had been out searching for violets in the thorny hedges, which enclosed their rustic garden, in order to present her father with the first nosegay of the year, as she had always been accustomed to do. At last she found some very beautiful and fragrant ones, which she brought him, highly pleased with her success. "Very well", said her father, when he

took the bouquet with a smile; seek, and you shall find.—But, listen”; he continued, “is it not very remarkable, and highly instructive to us, that the violets, these lovely flowers, should so often grow beneath thorny hedges. Who, in all the world, would have imagined we should find so many joys in this wild, sequestered valley, and beneath this old, moss-grown roof! However, no situation of life is so thorny, as not to hide some quiet joys beneath the thorns. Therefore never part with piety and goodness, my dear child; and, however hard your fate may become in future days, you never will lack some calm, heartfelt joys.”

Once a citizen’s wife from the neighbouring town had come to buy flax from the farmer, and brought her little boy with her. While they were looking at, and bargaining about, the flax, the boy finding the garden-gate open, had entered there, and, wanting to rob a rose-bush of his flowers, stung his hands with the thorns. At the noise he set up, his mother, accompanied by the farmer’s wife, and James and Mary, hastened to the spot, where they found the boy with bleeding hands, crying, and execrating the bad, treacherous flowers.

“This is the way we full-grown children often spoil our sports!” said James. “Every pleasure is surrounded with thorns, like this rose, and at these we generally will grasp with both hands. The one will ruin himself by dancing, the other by drinking, or gambling; the third by even worse than that; and, when they have done so, there they stand, crying, and exclaiming against every

enjoyment. Do not, therefore, be drawn into imprudence by the aspect of the beautiful rose. Man is a rational creature, and ought not to follow merely his instincts, but always to act with prudence and forethought."

On a fine, bright Sunday morning Mary came down into the garden with her father, for the first time after some rainy days. There she found the first lilies in full flower, —a lovely aspect in the rays of the rising sun. She immediately called together the people of the farm, who had long been desirous of seeing a lily, and now greatly admired these fine flowers.

"How bright and white, how pure and spotless they are", said the farmer's wife.

"So it is", said James, greatly moved. "Would to God, the heart of every one were as pure and spotless! This would be a grateful sight to the Lord, and to His angels! For, a pure heart only, is akin to heaven."

"And how beautifully straight, how tall and erect they stand there!" remarked the farmer.

"Like a finger, pointing up wards to heaven!" rejoined James. "I like to see lilies; and there ought to be one, at least, in every farmer's garden. Working so exclusively upon the soil, we but too easily forget to look up to heaven. This beautiful, erect stalk, however, will remind us that we ought, notwithstanding our labours and painstaking on earth, to look upwards, and search for something better than this world affords."

"Every herb", he continued in his impressive manner,

“the tenderest blades of grass even, soar upwards; and those, that are too weak to raise themselves by their own efforts, such as beans, peas, and the hops here in this hedge, will climb, and ramp towards the light. It would be a sad thing, if man alone, with his thoughts, desires, and hopes, were to continue creeping on the ground!”

One day, when James was planting young shoots into a newly-turned bed, Mary was weeding on a neighbouring piece of ground. “This twofold occupation, my dear daughter”, said the old man, “ought to be the sole business of our lives. Our hearts also are a garden, entrusted to our care by the Lord, and where we ought to be unceasingly employed with implanting good seeds, and rooting up the weeds, which otherwise would soon overgrow the good plants. He, who does acquit himself well of this task, and always prays to Him, from whom we receive sunshine, and rain and dews; prosperity, and increase,—for His supreme blessing;—that man will prepare the finest garden in his heart,—a true garden of Eden.”

In industry and frugality, instructive conversation, and many innocent pleasures, James and Mary spent three years at the fir-hill farm, where they almost forgot their former sorrows. When, however, autumn set in for the fourth time after their arrival, and the noon-day sun began to throw longer shadows, when the pink and blue asters, the last ornaments of the garden, were in flower, the leaves of the trees were changing colour, and the garden approached the stillness of winter, old James be-

gan to perceive a considerable decrease of his powers, and often felt very poorly. Though he tried to hide this from the eyes of Mary, being unwilling to cause her any pain, yet his remarks on the flowers from this time assumed such a melancholy character, that the heart of his loving daughter at times became very heavy.

Once Mary had been looking at a rose, whose development had been delayed, and which now, in autumn, stood forth in full flower. She intended to cut it off; but, as soon as she touched it, suddenly the tender petals fell scattered to the ground.

"Thus is man!" said her father. "While we are young we resemble an expanding rose: yet, like the rose, we fade; and our flowering-time is short, and soon passes by. Therefore, my dear child, do not be proud of the vain, perishable beauty of the body; but rather strive for the beauty of the soul—for never-fading virtue."

Another time, by nightfall, James was still breaking apples from a tree, and handing them down to Mary, who arranged them carefully in a basket. On this occasion he said: "How the autumnal air blows so mournfully over the stubble-fields, and sports with the yellow leaves as well, as with these grey hairs.—My autumn is at hand, my dear Mary, and yours will come yet. Try to be then, like this tree, full of good fruit, that the master of that vast garden, the universe, may look at you with satisfaction."

James, on seeing Mary put some seeds into the soil

for next spring, said to her, "Thus, my daughter, we shall some day be laid up under ground, and covered with earth. But never mind this! As, after a short time, the seed-corn in the ground will begin to live, rising as a beautiful flower, and standing in triumph as it were, over its own grave, so we also shall some day leave our grave in beauty and splendour. Recollect this, my dear Mary, when they will lay me to my last repose. May the flowers, which you then plant upon my grave, be an image of resurrection and immortality to you!"

Mary looked at her father. Two big tears had risen to his eyes. She was startled, and gloomy apprehensions entered into her heart.

CHAPTER XI.

JAMES' ILLNESS.

In the early part of winter, which this year set in with great rigour, covering hill and dale with deep masses of snow, good James fell very ill. Mary begged him to allow her sending for a physician, and the kind-hearted farmer went to the next town in a sledge, in order to fetch one. After the physician had prescribed for the sick man, Mary accompanied him to the door, enquiring whether she might hope to see her father soon in good health again. Upon this the physician told her, that, though there was no danger to be apprehended for the present, still it was very

likely the illness would end in a decline; and, considering the advanced age of the patient, recovery was a thing not to be thought of. At this answer, which justified her worst fears, Mary almost fainted. However she dried her tears before she went back to her father, and tried to show a cheerful countenance, in order not to afflict him by seeming to be cast down.

Mary with the greatest care nursed her dearly beloved father, like a good daughter as she was. She read his wishes in his eyes, and fulfilled them before he could express them by words. The long wintry nights she spent watching and sitting at his pillow; and when others wanted to relieve her, that she might not be used up, and taken ill herself, and she had after many instances consented to lie down for a while on a form, she scarcely would close her eyes. When he did but cough she was frightened, when he but moved in his bed she went to his side on tiptoe, in order to see what was the matter. With the tenderest assiduity she prepared and served up his food. She would shake up his pillows, read to him, and pray for his health, without ceasing. Innumerable times, when he had fallen asleep for a while, she would stand at his bed-side, wringing her hands, and saying with moist eyes, "Oh, my God! I beseech Thee, preserve my father to me—if it even be but for a few years." Her industry, which had often made her sit up for nights together, knitting and sewing, had enabled her to save a small capital. This she spent now to the last farthing, in order to procure

everything, which could in some degree alleviate his sufferings.

Though the pious old man mended in some degree, yet he felt but too well this illness would be his last; however, he generally appeared very calm, and prepared for everything. With the greatest serenity he used to speak of his approaching dissolution. But then Mary would say, "Oh, dearest father donot advert to this! I dare not even think of it. What should I begin then? Alas, your poor Mary would then have no one on earth to love her."

"Donot weep, dear child", then James would say, kindly extending to her his hand. "You still have a good father in Heaven. He will remain to you, even if your father on earth should be taken from you.

"How you will earn your living, and get on in this world, this is my least care. The fowls of the air find their food, why should you not find yours? The Lord feedeth the sparrow on the roof, why should he not feed you? Man wants but little, and that little but for a short time. —Alas! I am anxious on quite an other point! Look, my only care is now, that you will always remain as pious and good, and innocent, as, Heaven be thanked, you are now.

"Alas, my dear child! You have no idea of the badness and perverseness of the world, and the bad people that are living in it. Unhappily, there are people, who would think it a good thing to rob you, my poor girl, of innocence, honour, repose of heart, and the happiness

of your whole life! They would call you childish if you were to speak to them of the fear of God, of conscience, the divine commandments, or of eternity.

“Oh, fly from such men! When they will call you beautiful, and hover about you with flattering words, like butterflies about a flower: neither listen, nor pay any attention to them. Never, never take any present from them, nor believe their promises. Beneath the countenance of an angel often is hidden the perverted heart of a satan, and the snake sleeps often beneath the flowers.

“Look, the Lord has sent a faithful angel to your support—it is the holy blush of modesty. Whenever any one shall try to persuade you to evil courses, or pronounce but one word incompatible with innocence and morals—then you will feel it rising in your cheeks. Be warned by this angel of innocence! Do not afflict, or drive him from your heart! So long as he shall be your companion and admonisher, so long you will be secure from seduction. Should you however accede to but the least illicit demand against his warning, then you would be in danger of being lost for ever!

“Oh, my dear Mary! you will see an enemy rise in your own heart. You will have moments, when you will be inclined to do wrong, and to persuade yourself of its being not so very bad, but rather innocent, and lawful. However, take my warning now! Let the words of your dying father be deeply engraven on your heart! Never perform—speak—or think anything, which would

raise a blush in your cheeks, if your father were to know of it. My eyes will soon be closed for ever, and I shall no longer be able to guard you. But, remember, that your Father in Heaven will see you everywhere, and that your heart will always be to Him like an open book. As you would shun to afflict me, your father on earth, by a faulty behaviour, so shun and fear in a much higher degree to displease your kind Father in Heaven.

“Look well at me once more, dear Mary! If ever you should feel tempted to do wrong, recollect my pale countenance, and the tears flowing down my furrowed cheeks! Come, place your hand into my cold, attenuated one, which soon will crumble to dust. Promise never to forget my words! Let, in the hour of temptation, my cold hand keep you back from the precipice.

“Dear child! with tearful eyes you behold my pale, emaciated frame. It shows you the transient nature of everything on earth. I, also, once had a fair exterior, and was healthful and fresh, as you are now. Still, you also will be laid up some time, as pale and attenuated, as I am lying now, on my death-bed, unless the Lord take you from this earth earlier and speedier! The pleasures of my youth have faded like the flowers of last spring, whose place is nowhere to be found;—like the dew-drops on the flowers which, after glistening but for a few moments, will disappear for ever. Generous deeds, however, are like precious stones, which possess a lasting value; and virtue and a good conscience resemble that most pre-

cious of all stones: the diamond, which no human force is able to destroy. Strive after this jewel!—The good deeds I performed, are now the only joy I feel, and my failings the only pain I experience.

“Persevere in the right course, dear child! Direct your eyes towards the Lord, often; act like one continually exposed to His eyes, bear Him always in your heart. In Him I found my sweetest pleasures, and the best and sole comfort in all my sorrows.

“Believe me, Mary; I speak the truth! If it were otherwise, I should tell you also. I have seen as much of the world as any one, during the time I was abroad with the Count. In the large towns where we made a stay I saw everything that was grand and beautiful. I often spent weeks together in a perpetual whirl of festivities; for, all those splendid banquets, those gay masquerades, musical entertainments, and those joyous words I beheld and heard as well as my master; and of all those exquisite viands and costly wines so much used to fall to my share, that I could not taste it all. Still, all these noisy pleasures left my heart empty and cold. I may well assure you, that one hour of calm devotion in our bower at Eichburg, or beneath the thatched roof of this farm, nay even on this, my death-bed, has been to me a source of higher and more sincere enjoyment, than all those vain pleasures. You, if therefore, seek your happiness in God, you will find it in the highest degree.

“You are well aware, my dear child, that my life has

not been without its sorrows. When your dear mother died my heart was for a long time like a piece of dry ground scorched by the rays of the sun, and languishing for rain. In a similar manner I languished for consolation, which I at length received from the Lord. Oh, my child! days will come in your life also, when your heart will be like the parched soil. However, never give yourself up to despair! The earth does not in vain thirst for rain;—the Lord will send it at the right time. Seek your consolation in God; he will comfort your heart, and refresh it, as a mild shower refreshes the scorched soil.

“Be firm as a rock in your trust in the holy Providence of the Lord. He will arrange everything for the best, if you continue to love Him; and conduct you to eternal bliss, after the sufferings of this world.

“Do you recollect, dear Mary, how much you suffered when, on our toilsome journey, I sank down exhausted at the road side? Look, this misfortune was the means which the Lord used for procuring us this quiet retreat with the good farmers, where we now have been living for more than three years. Without this fainting-fit we should either never have passed their threshold; or, at all events, their compassion would not have been roused to such a degree: they might have entertained us with perhaps a dish of milk and a slice of bread, and then have left us to continue our journey. Without my subsequent illness these kind people would never have become acquainted with us, or learned to like us as they do now. All the joys we

have found, all the good, which we may have done, the many days we spent here in happy contentment, were the blessed consequences of that illness. Thus, dear Mary, we perceive the kindness of the Lord, even in the misfortunes of our life. As God has scattered His flowers with a profuse hand, over hill and dale, in woods and on riversides, and even in swamps and morasses, that we may everywhere behold His kindness and generosity, so He has deeply impressed the traces of His wisdom, His love and compassion, upon every event of our life, that any observant mind may perceive, and find comfort and pleasure in them. And so every one, if he will but be a little attentive, may perceive them in his own life.

“Our worst misfortune certainly was, when you were confined in a prison, charged with a capital offence, and we were crying, and deploring our lot in your cell. Well, this misfortune will surely turn out some day to your advantage; nay, part of it I think I can perceive even now! At that time, when the young Countess distinguished you before all other girls, admitted you to her company, gave you that beautiful gown, and wanted to have you always about her person,—then you probably thought yourself happy. Yet, how easily honours, pleasures, and abundance might have rendered you vain, worldly, and—forgetful of God. He, therefore, meant well to us, when He disposed of us otherwise, and sent us that misfortune. In distress, in jail, and on our pilgrimage, we learned to know Him better, and to approach nearer to Him. In this

wild place, far from the dissipations of a corrupted world, He has prepared a better place for you, where you could unfold, secure from impious hands, like a flower in the wilderness.

“He, our kind and faithful master, will turn this sorrow to your still higher advantage. He will—for I am perfectly convinced of His having heard my prayer—yet bring to light your innocence, though I shall not live to see it. This latter satisfaction, however, is not necessary to my peace, as I know your innocence without. Certainly, dear Mary, the sufferings you have gone through, will yet produce happiness and joy to you; and you will surely see better days on earth—though the pleasures of this world be the shortest and least, and the great intentions of the Lord, in sending us such trials, will but be carried out in Heaven, whose glory we are to behold only after many sorrows and sufferings.

“If distress should fall to your lot, dear child, do not torture your mind with cares, but trust in the Lord, who will provide for you with the kindest solicitude, and make your cares quite superfluous. Whereever His holy Providence may lead you, and however hard your future lot may become; always think, that the present one is exactly the most salutary situation for you, however oppressed and distressful it may appear at the first sight. Believe, that exactly this situation is necessary, in order to perfect your virtue, and to render you worthy of eternal bliss.”

“Like a gardener, who selects for every plant that

place, which he takes to be the most appropriate one, and treats it only in the way best adapted for its growth and prosperity, the Lord will place every one into that situation, and into those relations, which are the fittest for his increase in goodness.

“And so, dear Mary, as all the misfortunes which, as yet, befell you, always turned out to your advantage; this my last illness and death will also become a blessing to you.

“Good child!—at the bare mention of that word your tears run a new! Do not cry! Do not look upon death as something so very dreadful! On the contrary, it rather is a source of gratification! Let us once more converse, as we were wont to do, when at our work in the garden at Eichburg. You know how it is with a hot-bed. Weak and uncomely the young plants stand together in the narrow, close bed. You would never imagine from their looks, with what beautiful flowers, or what excellent fruits they some day will be adorned. Yet, if they were to remain shut up in the narrow bed, they never would bring forth either flowers or fruits. They would not have sufficient space for this purpose. But the gardener did not place them in the bed with the view, that they should remain and rot there, no, he intends to transplant them into the open land, that they may rejoice in the beautiful blue sky, and the golden rays of the sun, fed by the rains and dews of heaven,—and by this means thrive more luxuriantly than they could do under any other circumstances. When I

took the little plants from the hot-bed, you used to be full of joy, nay you often requested me not to put it off longer, since the poor little plants were growing too close in their place of confinement;—you would be glad to see them in the open air afterwards, and say, “How well they feel now! I think I can see it by their looks!” Man is exactly such a poor little plant, and a similar hot-bed is our earth. This is not to be our dwelling place for ever; for, here we are nothing but poor, weak plants. However, we are intended for a better and more glorious fate; and for this the Lord transplants us to another ground, to His vast, beautiful, garden—Heaven.

“Cease your tears, therefore, my dear child! Think, that my lot will change for the better! Oh, how happy I am at the prospect of coming soon to the Lord! How well I shall feel after having cast off this mortal clay, which makes us suffer so much! Do you recollect, dear Mary, the undescribable pleasure we used to feel on the fine vernal mornings, in our flowering garden? Look, Heaven also is often likened to the most beautiful of all gardens where a perpetual spring is reigning—to the gardens of Eden. To those better regions I shall now ascend. Be always good and pious, that we may some day find one another there. Here we have been living together in many sorrows and misfortunes, and shall part in tears. There however, we shall dwell together in joy and bliss, when nothing will part us again! There I shall see your mother, also! How happy I am by this idea! Oh, Mary! cling to piety

and goodness! And, when fortune smiles on you again, do not for these transient pleasures forget the eternal joys prepared for us in heaven, where your mother and I shall meet you, and receive you to our arms. So do not cry my dear child, but rather rejoice in the idea of our happiness, when we shall meet anew!" — —

In this way the pious old man employed the last days of his life in comforting his daughter, whom he was to leave behind, a lonely orphan; thus he admonished her to keep herself untainted from this polluted world. Every one of his words was like a seedcorn falling into good ground. "Though I have afflicted you, my dear child," said he, "and made your tears run; still, these tears will be beneficial to you. That which is sown in tears, will take root more easily, and thrive better, like seeds sown in spring and moistened by a mild shower."

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST MOMENTS OF JAMES.

As soon as her father's disease began to assume a grave character Mary went to Erlenbrunn, to which parish the Fir-hill farm belonged, and communicated the matter to the rector, who being a very worthy clergyman, would often come to visit the sick man, and converse with him on religious subjects as well, as comfort Mary in the kindest manner. One afternoon he found the good old man

considerably worse. James requested Mary to leave the room for a while, as he had a business of consequence with the clergyman. After a while she was called in again, when her father said to her, "Dear Mary, I have just now settled my accounts with the world and my conscience; and to-morrow morning I shall receive the bread of life from the hands of the kind Rector."

Mary was so startled by the apprehension of his dissolution being near at hand, that she could not master her tears; but she soon regained sufficient command of herself to be able to say, "You are right, dear father; how could we do better in our sufferings and trials, than take refuge with the Lord!"

James spent the rest of the day, and the evening, in silent prayer, was very collected and talked but little. With an indescribable devotion he united himself next morning with his godlike Saviour in holy communion. Faith, and charity, and the hope of eternal life lit up his venerable face with celestial bliss, while a flood of tears bedewed his cheeks.—Mary remained kneeling all the while at the lower end of the bed: trembling, praying, and melting in tears. The farmer, with his wife, and all the other inhabitants of the house, attended at the religious act with great emotion, and with moist eyes. When the service of the dying was performed, Mary said, "At present my mind is more at ease, and I have been greatly comforted;—in distress and death the religion of Christ will give us a truly heavenly comfort!"

Meanwhile good James' dissolution approached more and more. The farmer and his wife, who loved and revered him as their best friend, and blessed the hour when he had entered their house, showed him every kindness they could think of. More than ten times a day either the one or the other would come into the little room, to see how he went on; and Mary never failed to ask them, "Do not you think, he may yet recover?"

Once the farmer's wife told her in reply to this question, "My good child! he certainly will not live to see the new foliage of next spring."

Hence forth Mary looked but with terror and apprehension through the panes of the small window, which faced the garden. Till now the coming spring had always filled her heart with joy. But this time she beheld with grief the first tender leaves of the gooseberry-hedge and the swelling buds of the trees, and was frightened at hearing the joyous notes of the finch. The aspect of the bright green shoots of the snow-drop and the cow-slip caused her a pang of anguish. "Oh God", she said, "everything is filled with new life, and all the world is hopeful! Is my poor father alone to die without any hope? But no"—she added with a pious look upwards to Heaven—"he is not hopeless! He will not even die, according to the words of our Saviour. He will but cast off this raiment of dust; while his better portion shall commence a new life above, in Heaven."

The pious old man loved to hear Mary read to him. This she did with a clear, soft voice, and great devotion.

During the last days of his life he liked nothing better, than to hear the last conversations of Christ, and his last prayer. One night, when she was sitting up by his bedside, the moon shed so clear a light upon the small room, that they could scarcely perceive the flame of the rushlight. "Mary", said her father suddenly, "read once more that beautiful prayer of Christ." She lighted a wax-candle, and did as he told her.

"Now, give me the book", said he, "and hold the candle to me." Mary put the book into his hands, and approached with the lighted candle. "Look", he said, pointing to the passage, "this shall be my last prayer for you", and then he began to read with a broken voice, adapting the words to himself and his daughter.

"Father, the hour is come, and now I am no more in the world, but she is in the world, and I come, so I hope, to Thee! Holy father, keep through Thine own name, her whom Thou hast given me, from perdition. While I was with her in the world, I kept in Thy Name, her whom Thou gavest me, but now I come to Thee. I pray not that Thou shouldest take her out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep her from the evil. Sanctify her through Thy truth! Thy word is truth. Father, grant that she also, whom Thou hast given me, get some time where I hope to go now. Amen!"

The hand with which Mary held the candle had become trembling, and her eyes moist; and with a broken voice she repeated the "Amen."

“Yes, my dear daughter”, he continued. “There we shall behold our Saviour in His glory, which the Lord has given him, because He loved him before the foundation of the world : there we, too, shall meet again.”

He reclined again on his pillow, in order to take some repose. The book he kept in his hands. It was a copy of the New Testament, which the poor man had bought with the first few kreutzers he could economise upon his food, in his exile from Eichburg.

“Dear Mary”, he said after a while, “I thank you for all the kindness you are showing me in my last illness. You have faithfully and joyfully observed the fourth commandment. Mind my words, Mary, you will yet be rewarded for this, in this world; however poor and helpless I must leave you behind me. I cannot leave you anything but my blessing, and this book. Continue virtuous, my good child, and this blessing will not be in vain. The blessing of a father, who trusts in Heaven, is of a higher value to righteous children, than the richest inheritance. Accept this book in memory of your father. Though it cost me but a few kreutzers; yet, if you read it diligently, and act according to its precepts, the few kreutzers I paid for it will become your richest treasure! Though I were to leave you more gold-pieces, than there are leaves and blossoms in spring, you could not purchase any better possessions with all that wealth. For, it contains the word of God, which has the power of rendering happy all, who believe in it. Read some passages of it every mor-

ning—for which you can spare sufficient time, notwithstanding the press of your daily avocations, and keep them well in mind during the hours of the day. If you should find obscurities in some passage or the other, you ought to beg some clergyman to expound them to you, as I always used to do. The most important portions, however, are clear enough for any one. Stick to these precepts, observe them, and you will soon perceive the blessings which attend this course. Look, that one passage: “Consider the lilies on the field!” has taught me a higher wisdom than all the various books I ever read during my youth. The deep meaning of this passage was to me a source of a thousand innocent pleasures; and in a thousand distresses, which otherwise would have filled me with anxious cares, and made me faint-hearted, it afforded me a cheerful courage.”

Towards three o'clock on the morning, James said, “I feel so oppressed, dear Mary, go, and open the window for a while.”

Mary opened it. The moon had set already, but the stars were sparkling with an indescribable brilliancy.

“Look, how beautiful is the sky,” said James. “What are the flowers of this earth, compared to those eternal stars! I shall soon behold them more clearly! Oh, how happy I am! Continue virtuous, that you may also enjoy this blessing!”

With these words he sank back on his pillow, and expired without a pang! Mary thought him fainting, for she

had never seen death; besides that no one believed his last hour so near at hand. Nevertheless, Mary was frightened; and immediately called the neighbours, who hastened to the death-bed. When Mary heard that her father was really no more, she embraced the corpse, weeping aloud, kissing the cold pale face, and mingling her tears with its chilly perspiration.

“Oh, my dear, dear father”, she sobbed, “how shall I ever requite what you have done for me! Alas, it is impossible now! Oh, thanks to you for every word, for every warning, which those pale lips ever gave me. With heartfelt thanks I kiss this cold, chilly hand, that bestowed on me so many benefits—worked for me so much,—and chastised me so paternally in the days of my childhood! Now only, I am able to understand, how well you meant, and how salutary this was to me! Oh, thanks to you, thanks for everything; and forgive me, whenever I afflicted you by my childish levity!—Oh Lord, do Thou reward all his love!—Would, I could breathe out my life also, and follow you to Heaven; my dearest father! Oh God, I beseech Thee, let my death be like the death of this righteous one! Oh, how vain, how vain is this life on earth! What a blessing is the idea, that there is a Heaven, an eternal life! This must be my sole consolation at present.”

All the by-standers were moved to tears; at length the farmer's wife, by repeated requests, prevailed on Mary to leave the scene of desolation.

Mary was not to be kept from sitting up all the subsequent night, with the corpse of her father; she read, cried, and prayed till daylight. Before the lid of the coffin was nailed down she looked once more at the body. "Alas!" she said, "this is the last time I behold your venerable countenance! How beautiful it looks, how radiant; as though eternal glory were already reflected on it! Oh, fare thee well,—fare well, dear father!" she sobbed. "May your mortal remains repose in peace, now, that the angels of the Lord—as I hope fervently—have borne your soul to the bliss of Heaven."

She had made a nosegay of some bright yellow cowslips, dark-blue violets, and a slip of rosemary. This she put into his hands, which had sown and planted so much in their time. "May these first productions of the youthful year be the symbols of your own future resurrection, as the ever-green rosemary is the image of my undying regrets."

When the coffin was fastened down every blow of the hammer went to her heart. She nearly fainted, upon which the farmer's wife conducted her to a bed-room, begging her to lie down for a while, in order to get more collected.

At the funeral Mary walked behind the coffin, dressed in a black gown which a charitable girl of the village had lent her. Her mortal paleness made her look almost like a corpse herself, and every one pitied the poor, lonely orphan, who had now lost her last relation.

Mary's father having been a stranger in the parish of

Erlenbrunn, his grave was dug in a corner of the church-yard, close to the wall, in the shade of two large fir-trees overhanging from the outside. The rector delivered an excellent funeral-sermon on these words of Christ: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Mentioning how pious and patient the defunct had been in his sufferings, an example to all who knew him, he said much that was consoling to the poor orphan girl; then he went on to thank the kindhearted country-people for all the goodness they had shown to old James, and concluded with an appeal to them, to supply the place of parents to the desolate girl.

Whenever Mary went to church at Erlenbrunn on Sunday mornings, and, if she could spare the time, on the evenings too, she paid a visit to the grave, to weep and pray there. "Nowhere else", she used to say, "I can find the heart to pray so fervently, as at my father's grave. To me the world has lost its attractions. I feel, that we belong to a better world, and long to go to this our true home!" She never left the church-yard but with the pious resolve to despise the lust of this world, and to live only for God and virtue, as this was the best means by which she hoped to be reunited hereafter with her parents at the foot of the throne of the Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEW TRIALS.

FROM this time forward Mary became very melancholy. It appeared to her as if the flowers had lost their bright hues, and the fir-trees about the farm looked so dark and gloomy, as if they were clad in mourning. Though her grief was in some degree mitigated by time, yet soon she had to bear other trials.

At the Fir-hill farm things had assumed a different aspect since her father's decease. The farmer had passed over the farm to his only son, a kind-hearted, quiet man, who had married a rather pretty and wealthy wife. The latter, however, was not only vain of her face, but was moreover ruled by the worst possible passion, that of money. Pride and avarice after some time became so strongly marked on her countenance, that it assumed a very repulsive expression, notwithstanding the beauty of her features. If she knew, that anything would be agreeable to her parents in law, she was certain to do quite the contrary, and even the quantity of victuals for which they had stipulated when making over the farm to their son she gave them but of the worst possible quality, and with the worst possible grace. She teased them in a thousand ways, and almost counted the morsels they put into their mouths, so that the good old couple at length retired to the small back-room, and kept little intercourse with their children."

The young husband was by no means better off. His wife scarcely ever stopped her vituperating tongue, and more than a hundred times every day upbraided him with the fortune she had brought him. If he did not wish to quarrel continually he was obliged to give in, and be silent. She would not even allow him to see his old parents, being afraid he might secretly give them anything. When he went to see them on an evening after his daily work, it was with a misgiving heart. He generally found them sitting sadly on a form, and then would sit down by them, complaining of his fate.

“Well”, the old farmer would say, “this is the common way. My wife’s eyes have been dazzled by the girl’s great fortune, and yours by her rosy cheeks;—and I have been too pliant against your instances. Now we are punished all three of us. We ought to have followed the wise counsels of old James. He never liked the idea of this marriage from the first beginning. I remember all his words perfectly well, and more than a thousand times they have been uppermost in my mind.

“Do you recollect, wife, your saying once, ‘those ten thousand guildens are a fine lump of money.’ But James replied: ‘Not so very fine. The flowers in the garden there, outside of my window, are a thousand times finer. But perhaps you intended to say, a heavy lump of money, and such it is certainly. It requites strong shoulders to bear it, without being pressed to the ground and rendered a poor, crippled, worldly wretch. Why do you strive so

much after a great fortune? You never have been in want as yet, but rather have always had something over and above your wants. Believe me; too great a fortune makes one overbearing. Too much rain—however necessary and beneficial is a certain quantity of it—may entirely spoil the healthiest plant of a garden!”—These were exactly the words of old James, and it is as though I heard him still.

“You, my son, said once, ‘Well, but then she is very beautiful, and blooming like a rose!’ Upon which honest James said, ‘Still, a flower is not beautiful only; it unites the useful with the beautiful. It is a means for preparing pure wax and sweet honey. A fine shape without virtue is like a rose formed of paper: a miserable, artificial thing without either fragrance or life, wax or honey.’ So honest James said, but we had no ears for him. Now we must bear the consequences. That, which formerly appeared to be our greatest happiness, now proves to be our greatest misfortune. May the Lord grant us His grace, to bear it patiently, which is the only thing we can do.”—In this manner the three used to converse amongst each other.

Poor Mary also was very hardly used now. The small room, where she had been living in her father’s time, was now occupied by the old people, and, though some nice closets were unoccupied in the house, the young mistress out of pure spite gave her the worst of the whole farm, besides that she subjected her to all possible mor-

tifications, and tormented her indescribably. All day long she scolded Mary, who could never satisfy her, however assiduously she worked, nor could the poor girl ever do anything to her liking. The poor orphan felt but too well, that she was considered an incumbrance to the house. The old people could afford her but little consolation, as they did not know what to do themselves. Often enough it had occurred to her, to leave the house. But where was she to go?

Mary asked the advice of the worthy rector of Erlendbrunn. This considerate clergyman told her, "The Firhill farm is no longer a place for you, my poor child! Your father has given you an excellent education, and made you acquire every accomplishment requisite for a house-keeper in a family of the middle classes; but, at the farm you are wanted to do the work of a robust farmer's maid; you are loaded with labours, which are above your strength, and unfit for your station, besides. Nevertheless, I shall not advise you to leave your present home immediately, or to go out on the precarious search of a situation. The best thing for you to do, will therefore be for the present, to stay where you are, to work as zealously as you are able, to pray, to trust in Heaven, and to wait for the time when it will please the Lord to free you from your oppressed situation. The Lord, who allowed your being educated for a different sphere of life, will also know when to place you into a situation adapted to your deserts. I shall try to make out a place

for you, with a christian and righteous family. Pray, and put your trust in Heaven. Hold up under your trials, and the Lord will turn everything to the best." Mary thanked the rector for the good advice he had given her, and promised to act upon it.

The spot she liked best in the world was her father's grave. She had planted a rose-bush on it. "Alas", she said, when implanting it, "why cannot I remain here for ever. I might then water it with my tears, so that it soon should be verdant, and covered with flowers!"

At this time the rose-bush was adorned with bright green leaves, and the purple buds began already to unfold. "My father was perfectly right", Mary said, "when he told me, that life was like a rose-bush. Sometimes it is quite dried up and bare, and you do not see anything but thorns. However, if you can but wait, the time will come when it will be clad in fresh foliage, and clustering with the finest roses. The present is for me the season of thorns—but I will hold up, and believe in your words, my dear father! Perhaps your saying may yet be verified in my case, that "Patience and time procure all things."

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY DISCARDED.

AMIDST sorrows of every kind came the 25th of July, the anniversary of her father's christening-day. This day former-

ly had always been one of joy to Mary; yet, the light of the rising sun, which gilded the walls of her chamber, this time found her bathed in tears. While her father lived, she had been accustomed to prepare a little feast on this occasion, either by presenting him with a small gift she had clandestinely worked in her leisure hours, or by cooking his favourite dish, with the extraordinary addition of a bottle of wine on the table adorned with choice flowers. Even now she considered how she might best show her filial love to the deceased. The peasant-people of this district were wont on such memorial days to adorn with flowers the grave-hills of dear departed friends and Mary had often been applied to for flowers, which she always gave with great good will. So it occurred to her to avail herself of this custom in her own case. The pretty basket, which had been the primary cause of her misfortunes, and had, since her arrival at the farm, always occupied a place on her chest of drawers, now struck her eyes. She took it, filled it with many-coloured flowers in the garden, and, walking over to Erlenbrunn an hour before the commencement of divine service, she placed it upon her father's tomb. Her tears which were flowing fast, sparkled like dew-drops on the flowers when she put it there. "Oh, my dear, kind father", —she said, "your strewing the paths of my life with roses I can never requite; but I shall at least deck out your tomb with flowers!" The basket she left there also, as she had no occasion to fear, that either this, or the flowers it

contained, would be stolen. The peasants, when they saw it, regarded it with a melancholy pleasure, blessing in their hearts the good daughter, and offering up prayers for the pious father.

On the next day, while the farmer and his people were occupied with hay-making on the great meadow beyond the wood, a piece of fine linen was stolen from the bleaching-ground close to the house. The young wife, who was extremely suspicious, like all avaricious people, on missing it at nightfall, immediately suspected Mary of the robbery. Now, old James, who never thought of treating the affair of the ring as a secret, had told it to the old people. Their son, who also knew the story, had been inconsiderate enough to talk of it to his wife. So, no sooner had Mary after nightfall entered the house with the maid-servants, a harrow on her shoulder, and an earthenware jug in her hand, than the young wife rushed out from the kitchen, as angry as a dragon, charging Mary with the theft, and ordering her with the hardest words, to restore the linen instantly.

Mary replied humbly, that she could impossibly have committed the theft, since she had been hay-making all day long, like the other inhabitants of the house, and that very easily a stranger might have taken it while the farmer's wife was occupied in the kitchen. This had really been the case as it turned out afterwards. But the other cried out with dreadful violence: "You thief! do you imagine perhaps I did not know of your having filched that

ring, and your narrow escape from the sword of the executioner? Leave the house immediately. 'There is no room beneath my roof for vermin like you!'

The young farmer said, "Surely, you will not turn her out at this late hour! The sun is already down. Let her have supper with us, and allow her to stay at the farm, at least for this night, since she has been working for us all day long in this dreadful heat!"

"No, not an hour", cried the enraged wife, "and if you don't hold your tongue instantly, I shall stop it with a burning fagot from the kitchen." As the farmer found, that by speaking he would but make evil worse he held his peace, neither did Mary reply upon the vituperations of the bad woman;—she made a small bundle of her few effects, which she tied up in a clean white napkin, and taking this under her arm, she thanked for all she had received at the farm, affirming once more her innocence and begging only for permission to bid the good old people adieu. "That you may do", said the farmer's wife with a sneer, "and I should like you all the better if you would take these two grey pates off with you. The plague on them; I wonder if death will ever come and fetch them."

Mary found the good old people crying. They had heard every word that had passed. However, they tried to comfort her as best they could, and gave her all the money they had in hands,—amounting to a few guldens,—for her expenses on the road. "Fare you well, good child", they said, "and may the Lord be with you. Your

father's blessing is a valuable treasure kept in store for you, which will come to light at the right time. Remember our saying, you will yet be happy."

In the dusk Mary, with the small bundle under her arm, ascended the narrow path-way leading to the top of the wooded hill. She intended to pay a farewell visit to her father's tomb. When she emerged from the woods the curfew bells of the village were tolling, and the night had set in ere she reached the burial-ground. Still the walking alone amongst graves at night, had no terrors for her. Going straight up to the site of her father's grave, she knelt down at the mound in silence and tears. The full disk of the moon shed its pale rays through the space between the two dark fir-trees, illumining with a flood of silvery light the roses and the flower-basket on the tomb. The night-breeze softly rustled in the boughs of the fir-trees, and agitated from time to time the leaves of the rose-bush; but nothing else was stirring. All around deep, calm stillness reigned, like the stillness of death.

"Alas, my good father", Mary sighed, "why are you no longer of this world; your poor Mary then might have told you her troubles! Still, it is well—and the Lord be praised for it—you did not live to see this new distress! You are happy now, and the sorrows of this world no longer touch you. Oh, would I were with you!—So unhappy as this time I never was during all my life! At that unfortunate period, when I beheld the moon only through the barred windows of my prison, *you*

were living at least, but now I must see her light reflected on your tomb! When I was exiled from my dear home I had you still—how faithful a guardian and friend! But now I have no one to support me;—poor, forsaken, suffering under foul suspicions, a stranger everywhere, I stand quite alone in this world, and no place to call my home! From the last spot even which remained to me on this world, I have been banished. Even of that mournful joy, to sit by your grave, and cry, they will deprive me.—She burst again into a flood of tears.

“Oh Lord”, she exclaimed, falling on her knees, “our best, heavenly father, from Thy high throne in Heaven look down up on a poor, lonely orphan who is weeping at the tomb of her father,—and take mercy on me! When things are at the worst, they say, Thy assistance is nearest, and how I ever could be in worse circumstances I do not know, for my heart is nearly bursting with grief. Oh, prove, I beseech Thee, that Thy arm is still as strong as in the times of old; glorify Thy goodness in me, and do not forsake me, for now I have no friend but Thee! Take me up to Thy kingdom of Heaven, where my good parents are, or, at least, pour out Thy consolations upon my scorched heart! As thou doest by Thy plentiful dews in the calmness of night, refresh the flowers, that have been parched and made languid by the scorching heat of day, so refresh me also! Have mercy on me, oh Lord!” Her utterance almost failed from sobbing, but a new flood of tears relieved her, and she continued after a while:—

“What shall I do this evening?—where am I to go? Alas, I dare not apply for a bed anywhere, at this late hour. No one perhaps would let me enter his house, if I were to tell the reason why I have been turned off.”

She looked about her. Near the church-yard wall, close to her father’s grave lay an old, moss-grown tombstone. As the inscription was effaced, and it was in every body’s way besides, it had been placed there and used as a seat. So she said by herself, “I will sit down, on this stone, and pass the night near my father’s grave. Perhaps this will be the last time I am here, and I shall never behold again this beloved spot. To-morrow, with the dawning day, I shall then pursue my way—whereever it may please the Lord to conduct me.”

CHAPTER XV.

HEAVEN COMES TO MARY’S ASSISTANCE.

MARY sat down on the stone near the wall, in the dark shade of the overhanging firs, hiding her face in her handkerchief, which was quite wet with her tears. She was deeply moved, and prayed so fervently, that no lip would be able to tell it.

“Oh God”, she sobbed once, “is there no angel in Thy realms, who could show me where to turn my steps?”

On a sudden she thought she heard a sweet familiar voice call her by name, “Mary! Mary!” She looked up,

and was affrighted. A bright form, beautiful and slender, like an angel of Heaven—with eyes sparkling of heavenly kindness, cheeks, mantled with a soft rosy blush, more beautiful than that of a peach-blossom, a head and shoulders encompassed by a flood of golden hair; and dressed in a long, snow-white garb—was standing before her in the full moon-light, like a vision. Mary sank upon her knees, trembling, and exclaiming, “Oh God, what do I behold! Is it an angel of Heaven, who comes to assist me?”

“Dear Mary!” said the vision kindly, “I am no angel of Heaven. I am a mortal like you. Still, I come to assist you. The Lord has heard your pious supplication. Look well at me, do you not recognise me?”

“Lord of Heaven”, exclaimed Mary, “yes, it is you—Countess Amalia! Oh, how did you come here—to this gloomy spot, at this nightly hour, so many miles from your home?”

Countess Amalia, tenderly raising Mary from the ground clasped her to her bosom, kissed her tearful cheeks, and said, “My dearest, best Mary! all of us have greatly wronged you! How ill you have been rewarded for the pleasure you intended with your pretty basket. However, your innocence is now come to light. Can you, can you forgive my parents and me? Look, we shall make up everything as far as we are able under the present circumstances. Forgive us, dear Mary!”

Mary replied, “Do not speak in this way, my Lady. You acted very forbearing towards us, considering the

circumstances. Oh, I never thought of bearing ill will against you. I always recollected your kindness with the greatest gratitude. The only pain I felt was, that you—*you*, and your noble parents thought me vile and ungrateful. My most ardent desire was, that you might yet come to recognise my innocence, and this desire is now fulfilled by the merciful interposition of the Lord. Praise be to Him.”

For a long while the young Countess kept Mary locked in her embrace, while tears were chasing each other down her cheeks. Then she looked upon the mound at her feet, folding her hands, and exclaiming mournfully, “Oh, that good, pious man, whose form is decaying here, whom I loved from my earliest childhood, who made the cradle in which passed my first infant years, and whose last gift on the anniversary of my birth was the basket, which now is standing on his tomb—would to God, he were living still, that I might behold his countenance once more, and beg his forgiveness for the injuries we have heaped upon him! Oh Lord, if we had acted with greater caution, and placed better confidence into your tried honesty, your ashes would not be lying here; perhaps you might be still among the living! Forgive us; see, here at your grave, I vow, in the name of my parents, that we shall doubly compensate your daughter for that which we could not make up to you during your life-time. Oh, forgive—forgive us!”

“Oh, my Lady!” said Mary, “my father never bore the least ill will against his noble masters. He included

them still in his morning and evening-prayers, as he had been wont to do at Eichburg, and blessed them in his dying hour. 'Mary', he said, shortly before his decease, 'I firmly believe, that our noble masters will yet recognise your innocence, and put an end to your exile. When this should happen, you may assure the noble Count, and his kindhearted lady as well as that angelic being, Countess Amalia, whom I often bore on my arms, in her infancy,—that my heart has been full of regard, of love, and gratitude to them—till it broke.' Indeed, these were his own words."

On hearing this the tears of the good young Lady were flowing faster. At length she said, "Come, dearest Mary, let us sit down together on this stone. I can not yet part from this grave. It is hallowed ground. I feel here as in the house of the Lord; and your father's blessing is on us!"

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW COUNTESS AMALIA CAME TO ERLLENBRUNN.

"THE Lord is visibly with you, dear Mary!" said Lady Amalia, encircling Mary's waist with her arm when they had taken their seat on the stone. "He has conducted me hither, and to your assistance, in a miraculous manner. Before all things I must tell you this. Though quite simple and natural, it was truly wondrous and beautiful!"

“From the day we discovered your innocence I could not find a moment of peace. Yours, and your father’s fate always was uppermost in my mind. Believe me, dear Mary, I have shed many a tear about you. Inquiries after you were everywhere set on foot by my parents; but, we never could get a clue to the place, where you had retired. Three days ago I arrived with my father and mother at the Prince’s hunting-seat, which lies not far from this village, on the confines of the woods. It had not been visited for nearly twenty years, during which time its only inhabitant was a forester. My father who, as you know, is Grand-master of the forests, had come to this place, in order to adjust some difficulties concerning the boundaries of the domanial forests. All this day he was out in the woods, in company with two gentlemen, who are treating for the opposite party. My mother was obliged to play at cards with the ladies of those gentlemen and one of their daughters, which took up her whole evening, and I was happy they did not want me to make up the game, as I am no great friend of such amusements. When evening came on after this hot day, it was so beautifully cool and refreshing, the sun set so lovely, the hills, wooded with dark firs, varied here and there with picturesque rocks, were something quite novel to me, and pleased me so much, that I requested permission to take a walk, and to have one more look at the scenery! This I received, and set out with the forester’s daughter to guide me.

“When we were walking through the village the gate of the churchyard stood ajar. The tombstones were gilt with the light of the setting sun. From a child it had been my delight to read the inscriptions and rough rhymes on tombstones. Often I was deeply moved, when I read how a young man or girl had died in the brightest period of their lives; and I used to find a sort of mournfull joy in seeing any of the departed recorded as having attained to high old age. The rhymes also, though they often were better meant than made, used to move my mind to holier feelings, and I always would take with me some good impressions and resolutions from such a visit to a church-yard.

“Well, we entered. After having perused most of the inscriptions, my companion adressed me, ‘now I shall show you something very beautiful,—it is the tomb of a poor man which, though it possesses neither a monumental stone nor an inscription, has been adorned in the most beautiful and lovely manner by the filial piety of his daughter. Do you see this grave in the dark shade of the fir-trees, with that flowering rose-bush, and that pretty basket full of flowers, on it?’ I went up to the tomb, and—was almost petrified with wonder. At the first look I recognised the basket of which I had been thinking so many hundred times during your banishment from Eichburg. On a nearer inspection my belief was confirmed, and if any doubts should have remained the initial letters of my name, and my family arms on it, would have solved them all. On inquiring after your story and your

father's, the girl told me of your stay at the Fir-hill farm, your father's last illness, and your grief at his death. Then I hastened to the rector whom I found to be a very venerable clergyman, and who, besides confirming everything that had been said about you, told me a great deal more to your advantage. My first idea was, to walk over to the Fir-hill farm; but, during the rector's narrative, time had slipped away so fast that, when he finished, night had already set in. "What is to be done?" I said; "to day the hour is really too late to walk over, and to-morrow we shall set out for town at the break of day." Upon this the rector sent for his schoolmaster, ordering him to walk over to the Fir-hill farm without delay, and to accompany you to the rectory.

"Poor Mary, the stranger?" replied the schoolmaster. "If it is her I am to fetch, it will not take a long walk. She is again at her father's grave, crying and sobbing. I feel for the poor girl! It would be a great pity, if her grief should become the cause of an alienation of her mental powers! I saw her after curfew from a port-hole in the steeple, while I was repairing the clock in order to keep the old work going, at least during the time their lordships are in the neighbourhood."

"The rector would have accompanied me to your father's tomb, however, I beseeched him to let me go alone, in order to allow my bidding you welcome without any witnesses, and as my heart told me. Meanwhile I requested him to walk over to my parents, to tell them

the cause of my being delayed, and to prepare them for your arrival. Thence, dear Mary, my sudden appearance. — Thus, the flower-basket, under the assistance of the Lord, has been the means of bringing us again together here, at the tomb of your excellent father.”

“Surely”, said Mary, joining her hands, and looking thankfully up to Heaven, “this is the Lord’s doing. He has taken compassion on my tears, on my utter helplessness. Oh, how kind, how loving He is! Though people may say, God does no longer send His angels to the assistance of suffering mortals, I now know it from experience. He still will send His angels, in the shape of excellent beings, full of humanity and good feeling, such as Countess Amalia, who will come in aid to the suffering. Certainly, the Lord does guide their footsteps, and conduct them to the exact place, where their presence will comfort and delight like an angel’s vision.”

Lady Amalia interrupted Mary. “One thing I must tell you, dear friend, which is moving me particularly in this matter, and making me behold with pious awe the holy justice of the Lord, that often imperceptibly rules our fates. Look! Harriet, the worst enemy you had in this world, was intent on nothing but how to drive you from my heart, and to get a firm footing there in your stead. From This reason she devised that malicious falsehood, and her vile schemes really appeared to have perfectly succeeded. At a later period however, as you are yet to hear, this same falsehood was the means of her

losing at once our confidence and her situation, and of your becoming dearer than ever to our hearts. In her attempts at parting us her triumph seemed already to be secured by your being exiled for life; and when she threw this basket at your feet, she would never have imagined, that this crowning act of spite and malignant joy would in the end be the occasion of our coming together, never to part again. For, it was exactly this basket, which revealed to me the place of your retirement. It is an eternal truth that, if we love and revere the Lord, no enemy can hurt us, since He finally will always turn to our advantage all the evils which the wicked can inflict upon us, and thus make the schemes of our worst enemies the groundwork of our future happiness. The old saying, that 'bliss comes from our enemies', is verified again in your case."

"But now you must tell me, dearest", the young Countess resumed, "how you came hither to your father's tomb, at this late hour; and why you were weeping so disconsolately just now, when I found you?"

Mary revealed the ignominious manner in which she had been expelled from the fir-hill farm, which afforded new cause for wonder to the good young Countess. "Indeed", she said, "it is the merciful hand of the Lord, which sent me hither exactly at the moment, when you were most unhappy, praying for His assistance in your greatest affliction, sighing and in tears. There again you see how right I was, when I told you, that Providence will

turn to our advantage the evils which our enemies inflict on us. When that bad woman expelled you from her house she intended to ruin you, while she all this time was contributing to lead you to my arms and those of my good parents, who will vie which of them shall render you most happy.

“But now”, said Amalia, „it is time to leave this place. My parents are expecting me. Come, dear Mary, let us go together, you shall no more quit my side, and tomorrow you shall bear us company on our journey.” Mary whose heart was aching at the idea that, perhaps, she might never visit this spot again, bade the beloved tomb a sad and tearful farewell, and could scarcely prevail upon herself to leave it. At length the young Lady led her away with gentle force, saying, “Come, come, dear Mary; take the flower-basket with you; it will serve at least as a lasting memorial of your dear, departed father. Instead of the basket with which your filial piety adorned the tomb, we shall place upon it a less perishable monument, which will certainly please you. Now, I fancy, you will be desirous to learn how we recovered the ring, and this I shall tell you on our walk home.”

The silvery disk of the moon shed a brilliant light upon the two fair forms, as they were walking towards the old castle, entwined in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE RING WAS RECOVERED.

THEIR way to the castle lay through a long gloomy avenue of tall, secular linden-trees. After some minutes' silent walk along this avenue, during which time both had been absorbed in various emotions, the young Countess commenced, "I suppose I must tell you, in what manner the ring made its appearance again.

"This year we left town earlier than generally, as my father had some urgent business at our country-seat, and so the first fine days of March found us at Eichburg. We had scarcely arrived when the weather became unsettled, and during one night, particularly, we had a tremendous storm, accompanied by rain, which soon increased to a regular gale.

You recollect the enormous pear-tree in the castle-gardens of Eichburg. Now, this old tree, which used to bring scarcely any fruit, had been so much bent by the hurricane of that night, that we thought it would fall, and destroy everything around. So my father ordered to cut it down which, requiring to be done with the greatest caution, so as not to injure the neighbouring trees, rendered it necessary that all the servants of the castle should be ready to lend a hand if wanted. Our family, also, had gone down to witness the exploit; and in fact, nearly every soul in the castle was assembled on the spot."

"Immediately after the tree had fallen to the ground with a tremendous crash, my two young brothers ran up

to a rook's nest in the branches, which had long been the object of their childish curiosity. Examining it attentively August said to the other one, 'look, brother, there is something sparkling between this losely entwined brush-wood!'

"Indeed, so it is", said Albert; 'it sparkles like gold and jewels!' Harriet looked also at the object, but immediately started back with a face like that of a corpse, exclaiming, "Oh, Christ! it is the ring!" On this the boys detached the ring from the branches, and carried it to my mother in high glee.

"Really, it is the ring!" she said. "Alas! how greatly we have wronged honest James and poor Mary! My joy at the recovery of this jewel will not be complete, until we shall have found James and Mary. Joyfully I would part again with this ring, if by it I could repair the injury we have done them."

"But, how in all the world", said I, "could the ring find its way up to this rook's-nest, in the top of a tree?"

"That I can tell your Ladyship," said Anthony, the old gamekeeper, whose eyes were glistening with delight at seeing thus your innocence brought to light.

"It is clear enough, that neither old James nor Mary, could have hid the ring there. The height was too considerable as that they could have got up. Neither had they sufficient time to do so, for Mary had scarcely reached home when she was brought into custody, together with her father. It was those black birds, the rooks;—

they are extremely covetous of everything that glitters, and they will carry to their nests any object of this kind, at which they can get. Undoubtedly one of those birds has stolen the ring, and carried it up to his nest.—What I am wondering at in the whole affair is only, that this should not have occurred earlier to me, who am an old sportsman. However, I suppose it was the will of the Lord to lay this visitation on my good old friend James, and his daughter Mary.”

Lady Eichburg replied, “You are perfectly right, Anthony; and now I see clear in the matter at once. I recollect quite distinctly, that the rooks of this old pear-tree often came to my windows, which were open at the time the ring was lost. The table on which the ring had been lying stood close to the window, and I remained some time in my boudoir after having, with my own hands, locked the drawing-room door from inside. Undoubtedly one of those thievish birds has seen the ring from his nest, and carried it off in his bill during the time I was in the adjoining room.”

“My father was greatly shocked and dismayed at so unexpectedly getting perfect certainty of your innocence. ‘It pains me to the heart’, he said, ‘that we have treated those poor people with so much injustice, and the only consolation I have in all this is, that we did not fail designedly, but rather from ignorance and faulty information. However, I shall not find an hour’s repose, till we have discovered the retreat of these honest people, resto-

red their honour, and made compensation for the injury they have received at our hands!’

Turning then to Harriet, who stood pale and trembling, like a malefactor under sentence of death, amongst all the happy faces around, he exclaimed, ‘False, treacherous viper, how dared you bear false witness before your master and the court, while you knew that the consequence would be a glaring injustice inflicted on your fellow-creatures? How could you allow yourself to be the cause of an old honest man’s and his poor guiltless daughter’s ruin?’

“‘Seize her!’ he said to two constables, who had assisted at the felling of the tree, and who all this time had been hovering about her, like hawks ready to pounce upon their prey, and awaiting only the signal to do so from the eye of their master. ‘Load her with the same chains’, he continued with great severity, ‘which poor Mary has worn in prison; cast her into the same dungeon, which has been Mary’s abode. Let the same number of lashes be inflicted on her, as that which Mary has innocently been doomed to undergo; let all her savings in money and clothes be taken from her, in order to compensate for the losses those, that have been robbed by her agency; and, finally, let her be expelled from my dominions, by the same constable who has led out Mary, with not more of her property than she wears on her back.’

“All around were awe-struck at these words, and stood pale and silent. They had never seen my father in such a passion, nor heard him talk with this vehemence. For

a long while a profound silence reigned, till at last they gave vent to their thoughts and feelings.

“One of the constables, rudely grasping Harriet’s arm, said, ‘You do not get more than you deserve;—he who sets a trap for his neighbour, will be caught himself.’

“‘This is the consequence of falsehood and treachery!’ said the second on taking her other arm. ‘It is a true saying, ‘there is no thread so finely spun, but will at last behold the sun.’

“The cook observed, ‘It was the spite at Mary’s having obtained that beautiful gown, which first induced Harriet to tell that falsehood, and afterwards she could not retract without proving herself to be a vile liar. So, as the saying goes, ‘give the devil a hair, and he will drag you to hell by it, body and soul.’

“‘Well, well’, joined in the coachman who, having assisted in felling the tree, had the axe still on his shoulder, ‘we will not yet give up all hopes that she may mend; for if she didn’t she would certainly be worse off hereafter, than she is here. And now’, he added, flourishing his weapon, ‘the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.’

“The news of the recovery of the ring having rapidly spread over all Eichburg, the people assembled in numbers, so that we soon were surrounded by a considerable crowd. One of the first, who made his appearance, was the justiciary; he had received the account from his clerk

who, being present at the discovery, immediately hastened to relate the event to his superior. You have no idea, dear Mary, how moved the poor man was ; for, however roughly he treated you, he certainly is a very honest man, who always has been found unflinching in the cause of truth and justice. ‘Half of my fortune, nay the whole of it’, said he with a voice which went to our hearts, ‘I would consent to lose, if thereby I could make that this case had not happened to me. It is a dreadful thing to condemn an innocent person.’

“Glancing on the assembled multitude he then raised his voice, and solemnly said, ‘The only judge who will never fail, and whom no one can deceive,—is God. He, the Omniscient, was the only being that knew the manner in which the ring had been abstracted, and the place where it was hidden. Human judges are liable to fail from shortsightedness, and here in this world Innocence will often succumb, while Vice obtains the mastery. This time however, God, the judge of all things, who hereafter will reward the good, and punish the wicked, has already on earth brought to light Innocence, and unravelled the secret schemes of Malice.—Behold, and recognise how wonderfully all circumstances have combined to this end. First the dreadful hurricane which, last night, shook the old castle in its foundations, and which made us all tremble in our shoes ;—it was the means to bend the old tree in such a manner, that it threatened to fall ; then the torrents of rain which washed off all impurities from the

birds'-nest, so that the ring was immediately perceived; further it was ordained that our gracious master was to be present at the castle, and on the spot where the tree was felled; then it was necessary that innocent children, like the honourable young Counts, who never would think of concealing their discovery, were the first to perceive the ring; and finally Harriet, the false witness, was destined to proclaim as it were, by her own mouth, the innocence of Mary. This is not the first time that innocence is come to light by such a miraculous intercession. Though the Lord will but hereafter revise all trials, which have been judged here, and pass sentence on every one according to his deserts, He sometimes allows things of this kind to happen here, that we may look up to Him, the Supreme Judge, whom no one can deceive, and that they may not, by the aspect of all the injustice perpetrated in this world lose the belief in His eternal, almighty, infallible justice!

“This speech, with the justiciary delivered with great authority, found attentive hearers, who entirely assented to everything he said; and, when he had done, the multitude slowly dispersed, meditating on what had taken place this day.—This, dear Mary, is the story of the unexpected recovery of the ring.”

Conversing thus they arrived at the gate of the old castle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW NOBLE MINDS REPAIR THEIR WRONGS.

MEANWHILE the Count with his Lady, and the other persons of rank, were assembled in the principal hall of the castle, which was splendidly fitted up in the ancient style. The walls were entirely covered with antique German hangings, on which hunting scenes with the figures of men, horses, dogs, stags, and wild boars, were very artistically wrought in tapestry.

The colours of these hangings had, notwithstanding their antiquity, preserved nearly all their primitive freshness, so that, particularly by night when the crystal lustres shed their magic light, people almost might have been tempted to believe they were in an enchanted forest.

The worthy rector had already been a long while in the hall, where all who were present had with marked attention listened to his narrative. He told the story of the pious old man with such heartfelt emotion, drawing an excellent picture of his noble-mindedness, and his upright behaviour during the time he lived at the Fir-hill farm, and dwelling particularly on the old servant's unchangeable devotion to his master, whom only the strangest combination of circumstances could have induced to misjudge him and his daughter;—he mentioned so many beautiful instances of the indescribable love Mary bore to her father, of her filial care for his wellbeing, and her unwearied activity, piety, patience, and humility, that all

who heard him were moved, and the noble Countess, Amalia's mother, particularly, could not restrain her tears.

At this moment Countess Amalia, with Mary on one hand, and the flower-basket in the other, entered the brilliantly lighted hall. All pressed forward to meet them; all overwhelmed Mary with the kindest greetings.

The Count kindly took her hand, saying, "Poor, dear child! How pale and emaciated you look! Our unwise conduct has paled these lovely cheeks, and prematurely furrowed this youthful forehead. Forgive us! We shall do everything in our power to make the lost bloom return to your cheeks. The paternal mansion from which we exiled you henceforth shall be your property. Look, that nice, little cottage at Eichburg, with the beautiful garden of which your father had only the use, from this moment is your own; my secretary shall this very night draw up the deed of donation, and Amalia shall hand it over to you."

The Countess, Amalia's mother, embracing Mary and kissing her cheeks, called her daughter, and then drawing from her finger the sparkling diamond-ring, which she had shortly before Mary's entrance taken from her jewel-casket and put on, she said, "Look, dear child; though your innocence and virtue are costlier jewels than the large bright diamond of this ring, and by these you are rich in better treasures, I beg you will not refuse this precious stone as a small compensation for the wrong that has been inflicted on you, and as a pledge of the truly maternal affection I feel for you! As this ring can-

not form a part of your future bridal ornaments it shall be your marriage-portion. The time will come when you shall want a marriage-portion, and then I shall redeem this ring to its full value!"

With these words the Countess put the ring on Mary's finger.

Mary now shed the sweetest tears, as shortly before her bitterest had been flowing; she was, as it were, stunned by all this kindness, and almost sank under it as beneath a heavy load. She was not able to proffer a single word; her only language consisted in tears;—she would not take the ring.

One of the foreign noblemen said, "Do not scruple, my poor child, to accept what is offered by wealthy munificence. The Lord has blessed with great riches the noble Count and his amiable Countess; but He has also given them, what is far more, a noble mind, capable of using these riches in the best way."

"Oh no, my Lord!" said the Countess, "your interpretation is too flattering as that we could accept it. This is not an act of munificence. We have given to the world an example of glaring injustice, which I shall recollect all my life with grief and shame; and it is absolutely necessary to our repose of mind to amend the fault we have committed, as far as we are able. We possess no claims to any merit in this case, but only fulfil a duty enjoined by justice."

All this while the humble, retiring girl stood by, hold-

ing in her trembling hands the ring, which she had again taken from her finger. Her tearful eyes were directed towards the rector, as if to ask him what she should do.

The worthy clergyman said, "Yes, Mary, you must keep the ring. The noble Count and his Countess feel too delicately, as to consent to take back a gift they have freely bestowed. As this affair is quite an extraordinary instance of how suspicions approaching to perfect certainty may be fallacious after all, so let it also be an example, dear daughter, of the munificence with which noble minds repair their rashness.—See, my dear child, how the Lord rewards your filial piety; for, with him, who honours his father and mother, it must go well according to the promise of the Lord. He uses the beneficent hands of these noble minds to make up for your past sufferings. Accept with a grateful heart this costly gift, and, after having proved humble, patient, and submissive in your misfortunes, show that you are in better times equally thankful to God, and well wishing and humble to man."

Mary now put the ring on her finger with tears of gratitude. It was impossible to her to express her thankfulness in words.

Amalia, who, with the flower-basket in her hands, had remained standing at Mary's side, was highly gratified at seeing her parents act so nobly. Her eyes glistened with the sincerest benevolence. The rector but too often had been an involuntary witness of children's vexation when their parents rendered benefits to strangers; so he

was particularly moved by Amalia's unselfish kindness, and said, "May the Lord reward this noble couple for their generosity to this poor orphan, and recompense them with hundredfold blessings on their own amiable daughter, who is as high-minded as her parents."

"And this He will certainly do, for, that portion of our worldly possessions, which we spend in supporting our suffering brethren, is pure gain. It will not only be repaid in this world, but it is also a fund invested for a better world, and subject to no peril or loss. Hereafter it will bear plentiful interest."

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER REMARKABLE CIRCUMSTANCE IN THIS STORY.

The Countess now ordered supper to be served, requesting the rector to stay and partake of it, and telling Mary she was also to be of the party. While grace was being said—which pious custom at that time was still common among the higher orders of society—Mary had quite a peculiar sensation. "Good God", she thought by herself, "how much hurt and low-spirited I felt, when I was expelled from the Fir-hill farm without a morsel of supper, though I had been working for them all day, and how could I have imagined that in this very hour a meal was preparing for me in this castle, amidst these noble-minded persons! How grateful I am for Thy care, dear father in Heaven! Oh, forgive my faint-heartedness, and

grant me by Thy grace never again to waver in my confidence in Thee."

Mary had a seat assigned to her between the Countess and Lady Amalia. At first her timidity struggled against the idea of occupying this place of honour, but the Countess said, with a kind smile, "as our—not lost, but disowned—daughter has been found again, it is but fair we should have a feast where she necessarily must have the first place." With these words she took Mary by the hand, and led her to the seat destined for her.

During supper Mary's adventures formed the almost exclusive topic of conversation. The Count had brought with him his old, honest forester, Anthony, who was an expert in matters of forest-culture, and more, from affection than from necessity, always assisted in the service of the table. On this evening, however, he scarcely ever left his stand behind Mary's seat, wiping from his eyes one tear after the other. His age and long services had gained him a sort of right to offer his advice now and then. "Well, Miss Mary", he said once, "did it not turn out now as I told you and your father at the mark-stone in the forest? It is true as gospel, that 'honesty is the best policy', and that he who puts his trust in God will never be forsaken. There is now but one drawback to my satisfaction. Your father who was an old, faithful friend to me ever since my young years, ought to have lived to see this day of joy! How glad good James would have been to find his child who, after his wife's

death, was his greatest treasure on earth, recognised as innocent, and honoured in this way! I cannot help thinking, that the Lord might well have preserved his life these few months. If he then had died from this evening's joy, I should have borne it much easier. Would, he had yet had this satisfaction."

"I cannot but applaud your sentiments, my good, old man", said the rector, "for they are certainly a honour to your heart. Still, we ought never to confine our ideas only to this sublunary life, which form but the smallest, and, I may well say, most miserable portion of our whole existence. This world is but a sort of ante-room to the one hereafter,—this life only a preparation to the second and better life in Heaven. If we consider human life quite apart from man's future destination, then we must necessarily hit upon circumstances which do not agree with the wisdom, goodness, and justice of the Lord. However, if we turn our looks towards Heaven, then more extensive views are opening unto us, which will certainly set our minds to rest on everything that appears to be unequal and contradictory in our existence."

"Thus it is also in James' and Mary's case. This good child here has her sufferings splendidly recompensed by noble munificence. Her old, excellent father, however, was destined to die in misery brought about by a strange complication of circumstances, which induced his beloved and generous masters to judge ill of him; nay, he was even destined to feel the worst pang that may strike the

heart of a father—to leave his child behind him in absolute poverty. If there were no life hereafter, then such a disparity between the rewards of unmerited sufferings would appear to be a crying injustice, and revolt every feeling heart,—as this good old man very properly remarks.

“However, there is a better state of existence; there is,—and we are happy that it is so,—a Heaven, where the beautiful and grand termination of all our sufferings shall take place. There Mary’s father is better and more splendidly rewarded, than his daughter can ever be on earth. There he enjoys purer pleasures,—a blessedness, and a glory, compared to which this brilliant feast in this noble hall is as nothing.”

“There is yet one point to be considered! Though I do not *know* it for certain—yet my heart tells me, and in many cases the heart deserves better to be believed than the head—my heart tells me, that pious James, who certainly took a father’s love up with him to Heaven, perhaps participates more largely in this joyous feast, than we think of. Since I see so great an emotion prevailing amongst all the noble guests of this hall, I shall presently mention a fact which, under different circumstances, I might have kept a secret.

“One morning, on approaching the pious old man’s bed of sickness, I found him very happy. Up to this moment he had never been able, notwithstanding his great trust in Providence, entirely to banish from his mind the most

painful anxiety on the future lot of his beloved daughter. On that morning, however, he extended to me his hand with a happy smile, saying, 'at present, Mr. rector, my heart is freed from the last weight by which it was oppressed—the apprehensions on my daughter's fate;—now my mind is perfectly at ease. Last night I was able to pray so fervently as never before in all my life, and a repose I had felt never before, a most heavenly comfort, was poured into my heart. I piously believe that my prayers have been heard above. I shall now gladly shut my eyes, for I know that my daughter's innocence will yet be discovered, and that the noble Count and his excellent Lady will be in the place of parents to her.' These were the pious old man's own words on the morrow of that night,—and but this evening I found to my astonishment from the conversation at table, that this was the very night, when the old tree near the castle was uprooted by the tempest, thus becoming the means of bringing to light at once the hidden jewel and Mary's innocence. So his pious prayer was granted on the same day. And, perhaps, the glorified spirit of the deceased has continued his prayer at the throne of Him, who disposes of all human fates, to hasten the deliverance of his poor child from the sorrows by which she was pressed down, and to prepare for us this heavenly evening.—And, why should the happy turn of his daughter's fate remain unknown only to him, who is next concerned in it? To me, at least, it is a consoling idea, that he knows, even in the world beyond

the grave, of his daughter's happiness, and participates in our joy. However this may be, so much is certain at least, that this nightly prayer of the pious old man, and its fulfilment, cast the most beautiful and glorious light upon the whole story, and, as it were, crown it. It is but now, that the whole chain of events appears in its full splendour, and as entirely the work of Providence.

"No", continued the rector, visibly moved, "it is not a mere chance, which has thrown us together in this place; it is not the work of the blind fates, that we enjoy this hour of heavenly emotions and of generous feelings. It was the Kindness of the Lord, and His holy Providence, which introduced me, a perfect stranger, to the company of these noble hearts: to testify of Him by the words of a dying man, and to reveal a circumstance which unravels the most hidden mysteries of these events."

"May this be a proof to us, that God, who implanted the kindest love into the heart of all parents, possesses infinitely kinder feelings towards all his human children, and provides for them better, than any father or mother on earth could do. May we all live and die in the blessed confidence, that we are dear to the heart of a great and kind father; for, this belief, after all, is our sole comfort in distress and death, from which no one in this world is exempted, and against which neither wealth nor honours can defend us."

"This I believe also, dear Mr. rector", said the Countess, rising, and extending to him her hand. All the rest chimed

in, and rose also. "It is late", continued the Countess, "and, as we are to start at an early hour to-morrow, we cannot do better than retire in order to take some repose, and to preserve unalloyed the noble sensations, which Mr. rector has raised in our hearts. Better we certainly cannot close this evening." All retired in great emotion.

CHAPTER XX.

A VISIT TO THE FIR-HILL FARM.

NEXT morning with the dawning day the inmates of the castle were busily engaged in preparations for the journey; the busiest of all, however, were Countess Amalia, and one of the other young ladies present at the castle. The cause of this bustle was as follows.

While Mary lived at Eichburg she dressed like the daughters of her father's equals; in this dress she first came to the Fir-hill farm. Being obliged, however, after a time, to buy new clothes instead of those she had brought with her, and which were nearly worn out, and unwilling to excite attention by being better dressed than other people, she adopted the rustic costume of the girls of this neighbourhood. Now, however, circumstances were altered, and the other young lady, who was of the same age and figure with Mary, at Countess Amalia's request made her a present of a very beautiful and almost new suit of clothes.

As Mary hesitated to wear this pretty dress, Countess Amalia said, "Pray, do not be over-scrupulous, but put it on at once! As, henceforward, you are to be my friend and constant companion, you cannot continue to wear the dress of a peasant girl. Besides, your change of dress under the present circumstances will excite the least attention, and so you had best do it at once!"

Both the young ladies now vied who should dress Mary to her best advantage, upon which, taking her between them, they conducted her to the great hall, where the breakfast-table was already laid out. At first the company looked with surprise upon the third, unknown lady; but, speedily recognising Mary in her new dress, they gladly welcomed her, and unanimously agreed that the change was to her advantage.

Immediately after breakfast the whole party set out on their journey, Mary occupying a seat in the carriage next to Amalia. The Count ordered to take the road by the Fir-hill farm, as he wished to make the acquaintance of the good old farmer and his wife, who had so kindly received Mary and her father. On the way he inquired about their circumstances, when Mary told him that they were in a very distressed situation, and had little hopes of a quiet life for their old age.

The arrival of the carriage at the Fir-hill farm excited no little wonder, for, since the first days of the farm no vehicle, at least not such a beautiful one, had made its appearance there. When the carriage stopped at the door

the young mistress of the farm rushed out to the reception of the noble strangers, saying it was her duty to help out the foreign nobleman and his ladies. Offering her hand to one of the ladies she recognised—Mary. “What the deuce is this!” she exclaimed in her rude way, dropping immediately Mary’s hand as if she had touched an adder, recoiling as far as she was able at the moment, and changing colour more than ten times in a minute.

While this was passing in front of the house the old farmer was at work in the garden. The Count, with his Lady and Countess Amalia, went up to him, extolling the charity he had shown to Mary and her father, and expressing his gratitude for this in the kindest terms. “Why!” said the brave farmer, “I owe the good man more, than he does to me. With him the Lord’s blessing entered beneath my roof, and, if I had but followed his advice in every point, then I should be much better off. Since his decease I have hardly had any enjoyment but in this garden. And to his wise counsel it is owing that I reserved for my own use this patch of land, whose cultivation he taught me. Here I use to work since the plough has become too heavy for my old hands, and here, amongst the herbs and flowers, I find that peace which I have lost in my own house.”

Meanwhile Mary, who had gone to the small backroom in quest of the old farmer’s wife, arrived with the good woman at her hand. She had never before had any intercourse with persons of rank, and now it required Mary’s

whole power of persuasion, to induce her to approach these great people, which she did, faltering, and with uncertain steps. She, also was overwhelmed with encomiums and thanks.

The good old couple stood quite ashamed of their good actions, and crying for pleasure like children. "Did I not tell you," the old man addressed Mary, "you would yet be rewarded for your filial piety? Look, my prophecy is already fulfilled." His wife, who by this time had grown somewhat more confident, on touching Mary's dress to feel the fineness of the texture, said,—“well, well, your father was right after all, when he said that He, who clothes the lilies of the field, would also provide for you.”

The young wife, who had remained at a distance, now said by herself, “Umph! umph! live and learn, live and learn! So that miserable beggar has grown to be a fine lady. Well, well, who would have imagined it! Now people like us may not stand up with her; but, we know what we know. It is not forgot yet, that she went up yon hill last night with her bundle, to go a begging.”

Though the Count did not hear the spiteful words of the bad woman, he was quite shocked enough at the sneering and impertinent expression of her features. “What an abominable creature!” he said by himself, pacing up and down the garden in deep meditation.

“Now, listen, my good old man,” said the Count, suddenly stopping close to the old farmer. “I have a proposition to make you. I have presented Mary with the

property of the small farm at Eichburg, which her father held in lease from me;—however, some time will elapse before she will commence to keep house for herself. What do you think of settling there? You will certainly be pleased with the spot, and Mary, I am convinced beforehand, will not exact any rent from you. There you may cultivate herbs and flowers to your hearts content, besides that you will find quiet and peace for your old age in the pretty cottage which belongs to it.”

This proposition was seconded by the Countess as well, as by Lady Amalia and Mary, who were unanimous in their endeavours to win the old couple over to their views; but this would not even have been necessary, as the good people embraced the proposition as gladly, as if by its means they were to be delivered from a hell.

By this time the young farmer had returned from the fields, wondering what business in the world a carriage with four so beautiful white horses could have at his house. On hearing what had been proposed he did not hesitate long, but gave his assent at once, though he thought it a great hardship to forego the company of his parents. Hitherto his greatest sorrow had been to see them tormented so much by their daughter in law, and the idea that they would fare better for the future was a considerable comfort to him.

The young wife, in her turn, assisted with all her might in shoving, as it were, her parents out of the house. Bent on showing her manners, and hearing the Count addressed

by Mary as 'Your Excellency', she said with a profound curtsy, "Mr. Excellency is awfully gracious to us; it would be too rude if we did not accept. He would certainly be dreadfully shocked, and Mrs. Excellency might well think us worse than oaken blocks. Well, this is what I call good luck!"

She was interrupted by her husband, who said, "well, I am glad you perceive this. It has ever been my say, that charity to the honourable and virtuous poor is sure to bring down happiness and prosperity upon the house! You would never believe me, but, this time, I am right for once."

The woman became purple with rage. She dared not give vent to her spite in the presence of their noble guests; however, she looked daggers at her husband.

The Count once more promised to send for the aged couple, as soon as the necessary preparations should be made, and then the whole party proceeded on their journey.

CHAPTER XXI.

FURTHER EVENTS AT THE FIR-HILL FARM.

THE noble Count was as good as his word. Autumn had not yet passed, when a chaise arrived from Eichburg, with the order to fetch the good old couple. Their son shed sincere tears at the idea of this separation, while their daughter in law, who had been counting the hours to their depar-

ture, was highly rejoiced to get at last rid of them. This joy was, however, of a short duration, for the coachman was charged with the delivery of an act to the purpose, that they had to pay quarterly, into the exchequer of the principality, the market-value of the victuals due to the old people, under pain of distraint for the amount. This put her into a dreadful passion, in which she raved and swore like a maniac. This was "jumping from the frying-pan into the fire" she screamed, "and the old people would not have been half so expensive if they had remained with them." The young man was very glad at being enabled in this way to show some kindness to his aged parents, against his wife's will; however, he dared not let her see the real state of his feelings.

Next morning the good old couple set out on their journey, followed by the loud benedictions of their son, and the secret execrations of their daughter. This wicked woman soon after met with a fate as she had deserved it in the case of her parents in law. She had invested her fortune in a new manufactory erected by a commercial man, who promised her interest at the rate of ten per cent. This was to be annually added to the original capital, and to bear interest at the same rate. Thinking herself very lucky for having found this safe and profitable investment, she knew no greater pleasure in the world than calculating, and telling her husband, how much her stocks would increase in ten, or twenty years. She

was, however, soon roused from her golden visions in a

very unwelcome way. The merchant's enterprise miscarried, and he became a bankrupt. She was thunder-struck with this news, and from the day she received it never held up her head. In the day-time she was almost continually on the way, either to her attorney, or to the court of law, and by night she never could shut her eyes for calculating and meditating how her loss might be averted. At last, [instead of her ten thousand dollars, she recovered but a couple of hundreds. This brought her to the brink of despair; henceforth she hated life, and wished for death. The continual workings of grief really undermined her constitution so, that she was attacked by a severe illness. Her husband wanted to send for the physician of the neighbouring town, which she however expressly forbade, saying, "since he was not able to save old James' life, I donot think he will do me any good, either. The wise man of Buchdorf is a better doctor by far." This, however, she said only from avarice, as she believed the wise man's drugs would be cheaper than the prescriptions of the physician. This time her husband, following his own counsel, sent for the physician; but she was so vexed at the unnecessary expense, as she thought it, that she threw the first bottle of medicine from her window and clandestinely took the advice of the wise man. His celebrated tincture really cured her disease, but, containing poisonous substances, in its stead brought on a consumption.

The rector of Erlenbrunn visited her often during her

illness, beseeching her in the kindest manner to mend her ways, to change her way of thinking, to turn her heart from the world and worldly matters, and to direct it entirely towards Heaven. These exhortations, however, were not at all to her taste; and, looking at the well-meaning clergyman with unfeigned astonishment, she said, "I cannot at all make out what your Reverence wants from me by this exhortation to repentance. If you were to talk in this strain to the merchant who cheated me out of my money, then there would be some sense in it. As to me, I believe I am good enough as I am. So long I was able to stir abroad I never omitted to attend divine service on sundays, nor did I ever forget to say my daily prayers at home. All my life I have been intent upon working and saving; I always was a model of the most praiseworthy of all virtues, that of frugality; no one can say anything to my prejudice, and no beggar ever left my house with empty hands. Now, I should like to know, how a body could be better. I should imagine your Reverence would consider me as one of the most pious and virtuous persons of the parish."

The worthy rector, upon this, was obliged to speak more severely, in order to bring her to a consciousness of her errors. He proved to her explicitly and palpably that she loved money better than anything, and that this covetousness, which she erroneously mistook for a praiseworthy thriftiness, was in reality a worship of Mammon; he showed, how her frequent bursts of passion were the

effects of one of the most abominable vices, while she entirely lacked patience, and mildness of disposition, those most necessary and amiable virtues; how she had, by her avarice and violence, rendered her husband unhappy,—cruelly expelled that poor orphan, Mary, from her house, even banished from their home her aged parents in law, whom she ought to have honoured and beloved like her own father and mother.—He further showed, that, in her easy circumstances, she had by no means practised the precept of charity when she gave a slice of bread or a handful of meal to some beggar, often too, only in order to get rid of his importunities; that, on the contrary, she had altogether neglected this important duty, never assisting even her poorest and most deserving neighbours with the loan of but a bushel of seed-corn, though she had thousands of quarters heaped up in her granaries, and always subscribing the least and most inconsiderable sums towards the relief of persons injured and impoverished by fire, or by other accidents; that she had, by her evil courses, lost that fortune which she might have employed to the benefit of her fellow-creatures, and, by her avarice, shortened the term of her own existence; that she wanted the principal duty of a Christian, namely, love of God and her neighbours; that her attendance at church, however sacred a duty it was, could not at all be scored up to her advantage, since she had never been improved by it, and that her prayer even, coming as it did from a heart void of love, could impossibly be agreeable to God; that— — —”

But she did not allow the zealous clergyman to proceed in his discourse; crying and whining she began, "I am the most unfortune creature on earth; I have no friend in the whole world: but I never should have fancied the minister of the Gospel my enemy. If I had but wronged him in any way, then I should not wonder at his being so averse to me, and supposing me to be so wicked as he does now."

The good rector took his leave quite distressed. "Alas" he said, "how difficult is it for a person, whose heart is bound up in worldly matters, to acquire a sense of, and a longing after, Heaven. How far is he from the kingdom of the Lord, from true piety, and genuine virtue. The repetition of some sentences which he has got by rote he thinks sufficient to make his peace with God, and the throwing of a morsel of bread to a beggar he considers a complete fulfilment of his duties to his fellow-creatures; while, with all this, his heart remains as obdurate as ever, or he, even, in his infatuation, looks upon his vices as so many virtues!"

"Alas", he said in passing by the garden, "how greatly mistaken are those who imagine they want nothing but wealth in order to be happy. This wealthy woman, with all her riches, never in her whole life has had one happy hour like the thousands poor Mary found here amidst her flowers."

The farmer's wife had yet to suffer a great deal. For whole nights she lay coughing, and her avarice scarcely

allowed her a glass of wine, or a spoonful of broth. Her sufferings never induced her to seek comfort and patience in the only means, which are able to procure these blessings: namely in a pious resignation to the will of God. The worthy rector took all possible pains to lead her upon the true way to Heaven, and her disposition was really somewhat milder and more repentant in her last days; however, he still retained some not unreasonable doubts as to her genuine repentance. At last she died in the prime of her life, a victim to avarice, and a melancholy instance that riches alone are not sufficient to render man happy, but how easily they may make him miserable.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER MELANCHOLY EVENT.

MARY had accompanied Countess Eichburg to town. One morning an old grey-haired clergyman inquired for her at the Count's palace, saying he had a commission to deliver from a person near her end, who desired an interview with Miss Rode, without which she thought she could not die in peace. Her name she would reveal but to Miss Rode personally. Mary was highly astonished at this request and asked the advice of Countess Eichburg as to the propriety of granting this interview. The Countess knowing the clergyman for a very pious and sensible person told her to go, accompanied by old Anthony.

Mary had to walk a long way, to the most remote part of the suburbs. At length the party arrived at a house of gloomy appearance, situated in a narrow by-lane. Here she had to mount five pair of stairs the two last of which were so dark, narrow, and dilapidated, that she became quite apprehensive. Presently the clergyman opened a door made of rough boards roughly nailed together. By this Mary entered into a garret which could possibly be more wretched. The panes of the dirty little window were patched with paper in several places; a miserable bedstead with still more miserable pillows, if ever they deserved this denomination, a cracked chair with an earthenware jug without a handle, on it, this was all the furniture of the room.

The inmate of this wretched abode, however, was the most loathsome object of all. When this hideous piece of humanity turned her cadaverous face towards the newcomers, welcoming them with a hollow, cavernous voice, and extending a fleshless hand, Mary fancied she beheld a living skeleton and could not help trembling violently.

At last she understood from some words, which it evidently cost the patient great efforts to pronounce, that the hideous form now lying before her was the once pretty Harriet, Countess Amalia's late maid, who had been blooming like a rose when she saw her last at Eichburg.

This unhappy girl having heard of Mary's arrival in town, in the company of her former masters, had sent for her, in order to beg her forgiveness with regard to

the business of the ring. The reason why she would not allow her name to be mentioned was her being afraid that Mary who, she supposed, bore her ill will, would not come if she knew who it was that had requested her presence.

Kind-hearted Mary was deeply moved with this melancholy sight; she assured Harriet of her full forgiveness for the past, and her heartfelt compassion for the present. But when she was going to embrace Harriet, in order to prove how completely she had obliterated the past from her memory, the clergyman retained her forcibly, exclaiming, "stop, for God's sake, what are you going to do? The venom of this disease is contagious!"—"What sort of a disease is it then?" inquired Mary startled by his earnest manner. The clergyman looked down in silence, the patient, however, requesting him not to treat her misfortunes as a secret, since they might perhaps serve as a warning to others, he began, looking at Mary with a melancholy expression.

"Alas, my dear child, this disease is caused by disgraceful excesses;—this horrible death-bed is the consequence of an impure life! You are in the flower of life, my daughter, many will tell you that you are beautiful; they will speak lightly of sin in your presence; they will even excuse it; you will see many bad examples. Seduction will try to enlase you in her folds, like a venomous snake!—Let this death-bed therefore be an eternal warning to you. It shows where sin leads to. Would I could conduct to this bed every young

female of this town, in order to let as many as possible profit by this example!

“There are people, who call the clergy unwise, and tax us with preaching contempt of wordly pleasures; but, who can find those pleasures worthy of striving after, which will take an end like this?”

A long time ago, during the period she used to spend annually in town with her master's family, Harriet had contracted immoral habits, and frequented bad company. Afterwards, on her expulsion from Eichburg, she returned to town, where she plunged into the vortex of dissipation, living extravagantly, and appearing in places of public resort dressed in splendid attire which she had acquired by unlawful means. During her illness she had sold all these splendid dresses, which were all she possessed, for a tenth part of their value, and now she was languishing in the deepest misery, forsaken by all her former friends. This was the substance of what she had told the clergyman about her adventures.

“Alas”, she said, “I am a great sinner; I have deserved my misfortunes. First I quite forgot the Lord; I would never hear of virtue, never listen to the voice of conscience; and the only things I loved were costly apparel, flattery and pleasures. This was the commencement of my misery, and where it has led to, you see here.—Oh!” she exclaimed with a hoarse and scarcely audible voice. “I am afraid, that eternal punishment awaits me in an other world! Yet, since you, whom I injured so deeply,

have granted me forgiveness, I may at least hope for indulgence hereafter!"

Mary went home quite confounded with all she had heard and seen. At dinner she could not eat a morsel, for, continually, that frightful form stood before her eyes, continually that hoarse voice was in her ears. The idea never left her, that this disgusting form once was Harriet, pretty Harriet; and innumerable times, in the course of this day, she repeated this. These ideas brought back to her mind the blossoming apple-tree which once had been destroyed by the hoar-frost. Every word which her father had said then, and on his death-bed,—which at least did not leack the consolations of religion, and of a previous pious life—now recurred to her mind; again and again she solemnly promised in her heart to lead a pure and spotless life.

These considerations did not prevent her from interceding for Harriet with the Countess, who sent her a physician; and provided her with food, linen, and everything she wanted. However it was not in human power to cure her, and Harriet died, after a painful and lingering illness, in the twenty-third year of her age!

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER HAPPY EVENT.

NEXT spring, when the fields were verdant and the trees blossoming again, the Count returned to Eichburg with

his family. Mary made one of the company in the carriage, occupying her old seat next to Lady Amalia. Towards nightfall they approached Eichburg, whose spires were gilt with the rays of the setting sun. Mary in great emotion beheld her paternal roof and the walls of the castle which she had not seen for such a long time, and she could not restrain her tears. "When I last left Eichburg", she said; "I would never have imagined that I should return thus, in joy and honour. How wonderfully God disposes of us, and how kind He is!"

At the castle-gates the civil officers and servants of the Count stood waiting to receive him. Mary also met with a very friendly reception, every one being pleased at seeing her again, and congratulating her on the discovery of her innocence. The old justiciary took her hand with truly paternal tenderness, begging her forgiveness in presence of all the by-standers, thanking the noble couple for the munificence with which they had made up for their former injustice, and assuring them, that he also, whose fault had been the greatest, would contribute everything in his power towards the payment of the debt he owed her.

Next morning Mary rose very early, having been awakened by her joy at being again in the country, and the flood of light which the morning-sun poured into her room. She hastened to visit her paternal mansion and garden. On the way she met none but familiar and smiling countenances, some of whom, that Mary had formerly been in the habit to present with flowers, had, from child-

ren as they were then, grown up to man's estate in the intervening time. At the gate of the garden she was met by the old couple with whom she had found such a kind reception at the Fir-hill farm, and who now received her thankfully in her own house, telling her how contented and happy a life they led at present.

"Once", said the old man, with tears of joy starting to his eyes, "when you wanted a refuge we received you beneath our roof; and now, when we are, as it were, banished from our own house, you give us this pleasant dwelling-place for our old age."

"Well, well!" rejoined his wife, "kindness and obligingness shown to strangers will never bear evil fruits. One does not know how it may be made up in some future time."

"Why", said the farmer again, "we never thought of this at the time, nor did we act upon this consideration. Still, that saying will hold good for ever: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'"

Mary entered the house; the sitting-room, with the place which her father had been wont to occupy, awakened melancholy recollections in her mind. She visited the garden, where she greeted as an old friend every tree that had been planted by her father;—for a long while she stood musing by the apple-tree, which, just at this time, was in full bloom. "Alas!" she said, "how short is the stay of man on this earth! He is even survived by the trees and shrubs he plants!"

Taking a seat in the bower where she had spent so many happy hours in her father's company, and looking upon the garden he had cultivated in the sweat of his brow, old, familiar scenes crowded so vividly upon her mind, that she thought she saw him at his former occupations still. She shed a tear in his memory, but her regrets were softened, and her heart consoled, when she thought of his being now in better regions, reaping the fruits of what he had sown in this life.

Every subsequent spring Mary, together with Lady Amalia, spent some happy weeks at Eichburg, honoured and beloved by every one. One morning, when she was sitting with the young Countess at her work-table diligently engaged in sewing a new gown, the justiciary entered quite unexpectedly. Though it was a working-day he was dressed in his scarlet holyday-suit, his wig was well powdered, and his manner exceedingly solemn. After paying his respects to Lady Amalia he requested Miss Mary's attention to a proposition of the highest importance, which he had to make her.

His son, Frederick by name, he added, whom his Excellency, the Count, had for the present made his assistant, and designated his successor in office, had yesterday revealed to him that he had conceived a honourable affection for Miss Mary on account of her various excellent qualities, and would be happy to enter with her into the state of holy matrimony. As a dutiful son he had not been willing to speak to her of his attachment and intentions before

having obtained his father's consent to this union. This he, the father, had given him immediately from all his heart, undertaking moreover to propose personally to Miss Mary, for his beloved son. The union to which he was requesting her consent at present, he added with moist eyes, was the more agreeable to him, as it might conduce to make up in some degree for the wrong he had once inflicted upon her, and which, since this time, had caused him many a bitter hour. He hoped Miss Mary had no repugnance against his son, begging, at the same time, she would not consider the resentment for the wrong she had sustain at the father's hands, and for which his only excuse was human failing, and, perhaps, too ardent a zeal for the administration of justice—a reason to decline his proposition.—Having said this he stopped, awaiting her decision.

Mary was taken quite unprovided by this point-blank question. She did not know what to reply, and changed colour several times. The justiciary's son was an excellent young man, who had finished his studies with unusual applause, and at college as well, as in the office where he made himself practically acquainted with the laws, acquired extraordinary knowledge;—he bore an excellent character for morals, uniting moreover a noble mind, and amiable, polished manners, with an advantageous exterior. Since Mary's return to Eichburg he had at various times seen her in the castle-gardens, which she used to visit after dinner in the company of her noble benefactors, and

on these occasions, invariably shown her a marked attention. Mary was not without some secret misgivings as to the probable state of his heart, and at times it had occurred to her, that she might be happy with him; however, she had never given a hearing to these thoughts, being too humble as to raise her expectations to this height. Guarding herself well, therefore, against the germs of an inclination, which would but torment her heart uselessly, she, from this time, carefully avoided every meeting with Frederick in the castle-gardens. So, though the proposal which now was made to her, was conformable to her secret wishes, she could impossibly declare them at once, but with maidenly reserve and with blushing cheeks, she faltered out how much she was surprised by this honourable proposition, requesting time to collect herself, and to consider about it—and declaring, that at all events, she must first speak to the Count and the Countess, who were to her in the place of parents, and by whose decision she would stand.

This was quite sufficient to the shrewd lawyer who took his leave in high glee, as he never doubted but that this match would be highly agreeable to Count Eichburg and his Countess. Calling on them at once his tidings were joyfully received.

The Count said, “this is really pleasant news, my dear justiciary! I have often privately mentioned to my wife what a fine couple your excellent Frederick and our amiable Mary would be. We took good care, however, never

to say anything to this purpose, lest they might take our wishes for something like an order, and in matters like this even the least approach to a forcing of inclinations is hateful to us. Now however we are so much better pleased with our reserve, as our wishes will be fulfilled without our participation."

To this the Countess added, "I congratulate you from all my heart, my dear Sir! In Mary you get the best daughter-in-law for yourself, and the best wife for your son. Mary has been formed in the school of misfortune, which is the best teacher, as it polishes off all the hard angles, which are to be found in the minds of even the most excellent persons. Mary is humble; she never was spoiled by flattery; she is the most retiring and modest girl I know,—meek, kindhearted; and, what is best of all,—she has a pious heart. From a child she has been accustomed to work, and, having personally performed every domestic and rural labour, she perfectly understands the economy of a family. Good manners she has acquired in town, in a surprisingly short time, and without any prejudice to her virtues. Innocence and beauty are united in her in the most amiable manner. She is in every respect a model of a perfect wife, and your son will be very happy with her!"

As she had no doubt of Mary's consent, the Countess immediately began to discuss the preparations for the marriage, saying, "I shall do everything to make the wedding as splendid as possible. I shall give a dinner here

in the castle, and take care of the bridal garments.— Well, well,” she added with a smile, “now Mary can wear the ring at her wedding after all. Who should have thought it.” It was further agreed, under permission of the dean of Eichburg to invite the rector of Erlenbrunn, to perform the marriage-service. “This will be quite an unexpected pleasure to the bride,” she said; “and the worthy clergyman, also, who took so great an interest in her misfortunes, will be glad to witness her elevation.”

The wedding-day was one of the most festive Eichburg had ever seen. At the fixed hour the noble family proceeded to church, which was already crowded to excess by an immense multitude from all parts of the County. No one who could help it had stayed away from the ceremony, as it was a rare sight for all to behold a poor girl, who had been in chains and prison some years ago, elevated to such honours.

Amalia, crowned with a virginal wreath, accompanied her friend to church as one of the bride’s-maids. She did not fear to derogate from her rank or to lose anything of her consideration by this act of friendship, which, on the contrary, gained her great popularity, and made her the higher esteemed for her condescension.

Mary was standing at the altar, crowned with a wreath of white and pink roses, and dressed in a violet robe. With her fresh, rosy face and her modest eyes bent to the ground she looked like an angel. At her side stood the tall and well shaped bridegroom. Every eye was fixed upon them.

Not far from the bridal couple, at the side of the altar, honest Anthony, the old forester, had taken his stand. Looking at the beautiful bride he could not help thinking of the disgusting sight he had had of Harriet on her death-bed. "Oh", he said by himself, "would to God all who are present here, could have seen Harriet, in order to compare her with Mary;—there they would have perceived, where the two different paths these two young girls have taken, will lead to in the long run."

Before the commencement of the marriage service the worthy rector of Erlenbrunn in an excellent sermon addressed the congregation. Introducing his remarks by a rapid sketch of the remarkable history of the bride and her pious father, he went on to praise Providence which educates man by means of his sorrows, and preserves him from evil ways by sufferings, teaching him piety, humility, patience and confidence, preparing him by these for the joys destined to him here on earth, and, above all, preparing and fitting him for the joys of Heaven. He further called upon all parents to give their children a good education, and to inculcate on them the fear of God, the love of goodness, and the horror of sin, this being the best heirloom they could bestow upon them. The young he exhorted to live piously, to honour their parents, to preserve innocence as the most beautiful flower of their youthful age, and to keep the commandments of God, which were like a hand on a crossroad, indicating the way they ought to pursue in order to attain to happiness and salvation.

The wedding dinner was very splendid. It took place in the great hall of the castle. The place of the plate, however, which on other occasions used to stand in the middle of the table, was this time occupied by the flower-basket. This change, which caused general satisfaction, was the work of Countess Amalia, who had secretly given orders to line it with the finest flowers, and to place it there.

"It is indeed a very beautiful and delicate idea," said the rector of Erlenbrunn, "to adorn this table with that basket, which appears here to greater advantage than the finest plate of gold or silver. However, it is not only a splendid sight, but also one that fills a pious mind with holy emotions, and gives rise to elevated thoughts. It is, as it were, thronged with proofs of the Omnipotence, Wisdom, and Goodness of God who imparted to every flower its fine hues, its lovely form, and its sweet perfume, attiring them thus more costly than even the greatest king could do, with all his splendour.

"This flower-basket, moreover, is quite a peculiar proof of Providence, the Lord having used it as the means of wonderfully changing the fortunes of the bride, and preparing for us all this joyous feast. He, whose kindness we justly admire in the purple hue of the rose, the satiny splendour of the lily, and the azure colour of the violet—this God reveals himself still more kindly by the direction he gives to our lives, making use often of seemingly the most inconsiderable object to preserve us from mis-

fortune, to save us from distress, to deter us from sin, and to direct us towards virtue. Frequently He makes the simplest circumstance the commencement of a long chain of important events, and directs to one common aim the seemingly most contradictory occurrences, so that the life of every one, if we were but able to comprise it in one glance, would appear an admirable arranged whole, and a miraculous revelation of His Omnipotence, Wisdom, and Goodness."

"I hope our bride will preserve this basket as a family-remembrance upon which she can never look without the most lively gratitude to God. May the happy return of many similar feasts often afford her the opportunity of lining it with new flowers,—may it on the fiftieth anniversary of this day still grace her festive board."

CHAPTER XXIV.

JAMES' MONUMENT.

THE monument on the tomb of honest James, which Amalia had promised to Mary, was soon after completed. It consisted of a block of white marble, with an epitaph in golden letters, very simply and tastefully executed. The epitaph, besides the name, station and age of the deceased, contained only the following words of Christ, which certainly merit to be inscribed in letters of gold, namely, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me,

though he were dead, yet shall he live." Beneath these words the flower-basket, by whose means Mary had been delivered from her misfortunes, was very beautifully figured on the stone. Amalia had designed the basket after having it got lined by Mary with the finest flowers, and sent the drawing to the sculptor. Below the basket was inscribed that memorable passage from holy writ, "The days of man are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." The monument was surmounted by a simple cross of gilt iron.

The rector of Erlenbrunn was greatly pleased with the monument, and ordered it immediately to be conveyed to its place of destination. It had a fine effect in the dark shade of the fir-trees, and when the rose-bush began to flower, covering with its verdant branches parts of the snow-white marble, without, however, hiding the golden inscription; the whole was indescribably beautiful. The monument formed the most remarkable object of this rural church-yard, and in time became the lion of the village. As often as the worthy rector received guests at the rectory he used to conduct them to the tomb. When then one or the other of his guests would remark, it was a good hit to have adorned with a flower-basket the tombstone of a man who had at once exercised the trades of gardener and basket-maker, he used to say, "Oh no,

this is more than a happy hit. This flower-basket conveys a still finer meaning, and the people of the country justly term it the token of a very moving story. The ground on which we stand now, has been moistened by many a bitter tear."

Then he would tell his attentive friends the story of the flower-basket, and nearly always his hearers left the tomb of the pious old man with such sensations and intentions, that we, in concluding this tale, cannot offer any better wishes to our readers than to have inspired them with feelings and resolutions of a similar kind.

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